

In presenting this dissertation as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree from Emory University, I agree that the Library of the University shall make it available for inspection and circulation in accordance with its regulations governing materials of this type. I agree that permission to copy from, or to publish, this dissertation may be granted by the professor under whose direction it was written when such copying or publication is solely for scholarly purposes and does not involve potential financial gain. In the absence of the professor, the dean of the Graduate School may grant permission. It is understood that any copying from, or publication of, this dissertation which involves potential financial gain will not be allowed without written permission.

Matthew S. Rindge

Illustrating Wisdom: Luke 12:16-21 and the
Interplay of Death and Possessions in Sapiential Literature

By

Matthew S. Rindge
Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Division of Religion

Gail R. O'Day, Ph.D.
Adviser

Luke Timothy Johnson, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Carol A. Newsom, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Walter T. Wilson, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Accepted:

Lisa A. Tedesco, Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School

Date

Illustrating Wisdom: Luke 12:16-21 and the Interplay
of Death and Possessions in Sapiential Literature

By

Matthew S. Rindge

B.A., University of California at Santa Barbara, 1995

M.A., University of Notre Dame, 1998

M.Div., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2003

Adviser: Gail R. O'Day, Ph.D.

An Abstract of

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
Emory University in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Division of Religion

2008

Abstract

The dissertation reads Luke's parable of the Rich Fool (12:16-21) as a sapiential narrative, and situates this parable within an intertextual conversation regarding the intersection of death and possessions. Most interpreters read Luke's parable through a prophetic lens, and conclude that it is a simple and straightforward critique of avarice. The multiple resonances between Luke's parable and Hellenistic Jewish wisdom texts suggest, however, that Luke is drawing upon an established sapiential motif in Second Temple Judaism. Qoheleth, Ben Sira, *1 Enoch*, and Testament of Abraham reflect diverse understandings of death, and offer, in light of these perceptions, competing answers regarding how possessions can be used meaningfully. Six distinct options emerge in these texts for how goods can be used meaningfully given death's inevitability, uncertain timing, and potential imminence: enjoyment, inheritance, generosity, hospitality, alms, and giving to God. The interplay of death and possessions also figures prominently in ancient Egyptian texts and Greco-Roman authors such as Lucian and Seneca.

Luke's parable and its immediate literary context (12:13-34) illustrates, participates in, and reconfigures this contested conversation regarding the intersection of death and possessions. Luke 12:13-34 participates in this conversation by evaluating the relative meaningfulness of six sapiential options for utilizing possessions. In light of death's potential imminence and uncertain timing, Luke rejects as meaningless the pursuit of an inheritance, plans for enjoyment, and storing goods for one's own use. Luke proposes instead that the uncontrollable facets of death make giving to the poor in the form of alms the primary meaningful use of possessions. Luke reconfigures the conversation on death and possessions by appropriating certain motifs such as the unjust acquisition of goods and the attempt to exert control in the face of death, and adapting these themes to his own existential, ethical, and theological concerns. Luke illustrates this conversation by placing it in the form of a narrative and, in particular, a parable. Luke 12:13-34 functions as a sapiential discourse, the unique concerns of which are underscored by comparing Luke's version with the parallel in the Gospel of Thomas.

Illustrating Wisdom: Luke 12:16-21 and the Interplay
of Death and Possessions in Sapiential Literature

By

Matthew S. Rindge

B.A., University of California at Santa Barbara, 1995

M.A., University of Notre Dame, 1998

M.Div., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2003

Adviser: Gail R. O'Day, Ph.D.

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
Emory University in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Division of Religion

2008

Acknowledgments

The completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the time and energy of several individuals. I am pleased to take this opportunity to offer brief words of thanks to those who contributed to this project. What follows expresses only a modicum of the gratitude I have for the people who helped to make this finished dissertation a reality.

I am primarily indebted to Professor Gail R. O'Day, who has been an invaluable adviser and thesis director. She has supported this project from its inception, and her insights and questions have consistently helped me to sharpen and clarify my arguments. The other members of my dissertation committee, Professors Luke Timothy Johnson, Carol A. Newsom, and Walter T. Wilson, provided thoughtful (and timely) feedback on my work. I am grateful for their encouragement and insight. All errors and shortcomings are, of course, my own.

Fellow doctoral candidates at Emory proved to be helpful colleagues. Robert von Thaden and Bart Bruehler read the dissertation proposal, and offered instructive comments about the overall goals of the project. I presented a draft of chapter five to the New Testament colloquium at Emory, and Elizabeth Shively's prepared response was constructive and informative. Conversations with Robert Williamson, Jr. helped me think more clearly about various aspects of the work. I thank Eric Barreto for serving as a scribe at my proposal and dissertation defenses. I also owe thanks to the staff at Pitts Theological Library at Emory, and especially John Weaver, for helping me locate and obtain various items.

My parents, Samuel and Kathy, have consistently supported me throughout my time at Emory. I thank them for their kindness and generosity.

I dedicate this dissertation to Shannon, Ava, and Sophia. They unwittingly endured my absences from home, and the stress that I sometimes brought there. Their presence throughout this project enlivened me, and served as the primary incentive to finish. I thank Shannon for her unconditional love and support. I could not ask for a better partner with whom to share this meaning-filled journey of life. I thank Ava and Sophia, in whom I already see much life and wisdom, for their patience and understanding.

Illustrating Wisdom: Luke 12:16-21 and the
Interplay of Death and Possessions in Sapiential Literature

Table of Contents

1. Luke's Parable of the Rich Fool (12:16-21): A History of Its Interpretation	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 The Early-Medieval Periods	6
1.3 Reformation	13
1.4 Nineteenth Century	19
1.4.1 Adolf Jülicher: A Turning Point in Scholarship?	20
1.5 Modern Readers	23
1.5.1 Continuing the "Early-Medieval-Reformation" Paradigm	23
1.5.2 Reading the Parable in its Literary Context	30
1.5.3 Reading the Parable with Greco-Roman Texts	33
1.5.4 Reading the Parable with (Jewish) Wisdom Texts	37
1.5.4.1 Bernard Brandon Scott	42
1.5.4.2 Georg Eichholz	45
1.5.4.3 Egbert Seng	49
1.6 Conclusion: Advancing a Conversation and Filling a Gap in Scholarship	53
2. The Interplay of Death and Possessions in Qoheleth, Ben Sira, <i>1 Enoch</i> , and <i>Testament of Abraham</i>	55
2.1 Introduction	55
2.2 The Interplay of Death and Possessions in Qoheleth	57
2.2.1 Qoheleth 2:1-26	60
2.2.2 Qoheleth 3:11-22	65
2.2.3 Qoheleth 5:10-6:2	66
2.2.4 Qoheleth 8:8-15	69
2.2.5 Qoheleth 9:1-10	70
2.2.6 Qoheleth 11:7-12:8	73
2.2.7 Conclusion	76
2.3 The Interplay of Death and Possessions in Ben Sira	79
2.3.1 Death in Ben Sira	79
2.3.2 Possessions in Ben Sira	81
2.3.3 Ben Sira 11:14-28	85
2.3.4 Ben Sira 14:3-19	94
2.3.5 Conclusion	97
2.4 The Interplay of Death and Possessions in the Epistle of <i>1 Enoch</i>	99
2.4.1 Death and a Divine Judgment in the Epistle of <i>1 Enoch</i>	99
2.4.2 Participating in a Sapiential Conversation on Death and Possessions	104
2.4.3 Conclusion	109
2.5 The Interplay of Death and Possessions in <i>Testament of Abraham</i>	112
2.5.1 Death as the Primary Plot Device	113

2.5.2	The Inevitability of Death	117
2.5.3	Wealth and Possessions	119
2.5.4	Making a Testament	121
2.5.5	Hospitality and Death	123
2.5.6	Conclusion	127
2.6	Conclusion to Chapter Two	128
3.	The Interplay of Death and Possessions in Ancient Egyptian Literature	132
3.1	Introduction	132
3.1.1	Positive and Negative Depictions of Death and the Afterlife	134
3.1.2	The Uncertain Timing of Death	135
3.1.3	Death Accompanied by a Postmortem Judgment	136
3.2	The Interplay of Death and Possessions in Ancient Egyptian Literature	137
3.2.1	Postmortem Judgment and the Misuse of Others' Possessions	137
3.2.2	Negative Views of the Afterlife and Enjoyment	139
3.2.3	Death's Uncertain Timing and Generosity	140
3.2.4	Death's Uncertain Timing and Enjoyment	141
3.2.5	The Unavoidability and Finality of Death	142
3.2.5.1	Enjoyment	142
3.2.5.2	Generosity and Enjoyment	144
3.2.6	Remembering the Dead as a Means of Finding Control	145
3.2.6.1	Remembrance through Generosity and Acts of Justice	147
3.3	Conclusion	149
4.	The Interplay of Death and Possessions in Lucian and Seneca	151
4.1	Introduction	151
4.2	Lucian and the <i>Dialogues of the Dead</i>	152
4.1.1	The Unavoidability, Irreversibility, and Universal Fear of Death	153
4.1.2	Death as a Reassessment of Possessions	158
4.1.3	The Instability of Inheritance and the Distribution of Possessions	170
4.2	Seneca's <i>Epistulae Morales</i>	174
4.3.1	Perceptions of Death	175
4.3.2	Possessions and Wealth	180
4.3.3	The Interplay of Death and Possessions	184
4.3.3.1	Pleasures, Luxury, and the Fear of Death	185
4.3.3.2	Ingratitude, Insatiability, and the Fear of Death	186
4.3.3.3	Luxury and the Living Dead	187
4.3	Conclusion	189

5. Luke 12:16-21: Illustrating and Reconfiguring Sapiential Conversations Regarding Death and Possessions	191
5.1 Introduction	191
5.2 Luke 12:13-34: Participating in a Conversation on Death and Possessions	194
5.2.1 Possessions and Death's Inevitability and Uncertain Timing	194
5.2.2 Death and Possessions in the Broader Literary Context (12:4-34)	198
5.2.3 Sapiential Elements in Luke's Parable	201
5.2.4 Appropriating and Reconfiguring Qoheleth and Ben Sira	206
5.2.5 Evaluating Sapiential Recommendations Regarding Possessions	210
5.2.5.1 Enjoyment	212
5.2.5.2 Inheritance	219
5.2.5.3 Generosity	223
5.2.5.4 Giving to God	224
5.2.5.5 Hospitality	225
5.2.5.6 Alms	227
5.3 Reading the Parable in Its Immediate Literary Context (12:13-15, 21)	232
5.3.1 "Storing up for Oneself": The Critique and Analysis of Greed in 12:13-21	234
5.3.2 "Not Rich Toward God": 12:20, 21b, 22-34	240
5.4 The Man's Folly in Light of Sapiential Texts	248
5.4.1 "Storing up for Oneself": The Folly of Saving for the Future	249
5.4.2 Ignoring Death's Inevitability, Uncertain Timing, and Potential Imminence	253
5.5 Reconfiguring the Sapiential Conversation on Death and Possessions	256
5.5.1 The Dilemma of An Appropriately Acquired Surplus	257
5.5.2 God, Anxiety, and the Control of One's Life and Possessions (12:22-34)	261
5.6 Why the Man Is (and Is Not) Called a Fool	267
5.7 Comparing Luke and Thomas	274
5.8 Conclusion	281
5.9 Further Implications	283
5.9.1 Luke's Parables as Sapiential Narratives	283
5.9.2 Parables and Character Formation	288
 Bibliography	 292

1. Luke's Parable of the Rich Fool (12:16-21): A History of its Interpretation

1.1 Introduction

Luke 12:16-21 is one of the most neglected parables in the synoptic Gospels. Several modern studies of the parables omit Luke's parable of the Rich Fool.¹ It is even absent in a study of Lukan parables.² When the parable is treated, it often receives scant attention, meriting only a sentence or two of comment.³ Bernard Brendan Scott aptly summarizes the parable's negligible treatment: "[This parable] has not been of major interest in the history of parable interpretation, nor has it been at the center of controversy. Its interpretation has been stable, predictable, and unafflicted by the obscurities that so torment other parables."⁴

The lack of scholarly interest in Luke 12:16-21 is due in part to a perception that the parable offers little else beyond a simple and straightforward critique of avarice. The parable itself tells a somewhat different story. Extant only in Luke and Thomas (*Gos. Thom.* 63), the parable is situated in Luke's travel narrative (9:51-19:44), during which

¹ See, e.g., Alexander Balmain Bruce, *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ. A Systematic and Critical Study of the Parables of our Lord* (3d ed.; New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1898); C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (Rev. ed.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961); Dan Otto Via, Jr., *The Parables: Their Literary and Existential Dimension* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967); Eta Linnemann, *Parables of Jesus: Introduction and Exposition* (London: SPCK, 1975); Pheme Perkins, *Hearing the Parables of Jesus* (New York: Paulist, 1981); Robert W. Funk, *Parables and Presence* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); William R Herzog, *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994); Luise Schottroff, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu* (Gütersloher Verlaghaus GmbH, 2005).

² Kenneth Bailey, *Poet and Peasant* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976).

³ John Dominic Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1992), 83; Linnemann, *Parables*, does not treat Luke 12:16-21 as one of the eleven parables in her study, but she does comment briefly on it.

⁴ Bernard Brandon Scott, *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 127.

Jesus is journeying to Jerusalem.⁵ The parable follows a short dialogue regarding an inheritance (12:13-15), and precedes a discourse about anxiety, God, and possessions (12:22-34). After rejecting a request to intervene in a fraternal dispute over an inheritance (12:13-14), Jesus offers a warning against greed, claiming that one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions (12:15). He then tells the following story which the narrator identifies as a parable (παράβολή) (12:16a):

The land of a certain rich person produced fruitfully. And he began to converse with himself, saying: "What shall I do, for I do not have [a place] where I will gather together my crops?" And he said, "This I will do: I will pull down my barns, and I will build larger ones, and I will gather together there all the grain and my goods. And I will say to myself, 'Self, you have many goods laid up for many years; rest, eat, drink, enjoy.' But God said to him, "Fool! On this night they are demanding your life from you; and the things you prepared, whose will they be?" So is the one who stores up for oneself and is not rich toward God (12:16b-21).⁶

Basic features of the parable are noteworthy. This is the first of three ἄνθρωπος τις πλούσιος ("a certain rich person") parables in Luke,⁷ and one of seven or eight ἄνθρωπος τις parables.⁸ Yet this is the only parable unique to Luke whose subject in the opening line is not a person. The man's initial response to his perceived dilemma is to ask a question (τί ποιήσω, "what shall I do?") that many of Luke's characters ask.⁹ The man's monologue provides access to his mindset. This monologue contains an allusion to

⁵ Luke periodically reminds readers/hearers that Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem (9:51, 53; 13:22; 17:11; 18:31; 19:28). On Luke's travel narrative, see Filip Noël, *The Travel Narrative in the Gospel of Luke: Interpretation of Lk 9,51 – 19,28* (Collectanea Biblica et Religiosa Antiqua 5; Brussels: Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België voor Wetenschappen en Kunsten, 2004). There is fairly uniform agreement about where the travel narrative begins (9:51). Although most defend either 19:27 or 19:44 as the conclusion to the journey narrative, several other endings have also been proposed (18:14, 30, 34; 19:10, 28, 46, 48; 21:38).

⁶ My translation is based on the Greek text in Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Eberhard Nestle, and Erwin Nestle, eds., *Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece* (27th ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993). See chapter five for some of the text critical issues involved in Luke 12:16-21.

⁷ Luke 16:1-8; 16:19-31.

⁸ Luke 10:30; 14:16; 15:11; 16:1, 19; 19:12; cf. 20:9. Many MSS. omit τις in 20:9.

⁹ Luke 3:10, 12, 14; 10:25; 16:3; 18:18, 41; 20:13, 15; Acts 2:37; 4:16; 22:10.

a HB text, Qoh 8:15. The parable also shares many similarities with Sir 11:14-19 and *I En.* 97:8-10. Luke 12:16-21 is unique in being the only parable in the synoptic tradition in which God appears as a character and speaks (12:20).¹⁰ This is, moreover, the only time the author of Luke-Acts attributes direct speech to God (θεός). The three elements in God's announcement (epithet, statement, question) are noteworthy. God does not provide an explicit reason for calling the man a "fool." God tells the man, cryptically, that an unspecified "they" are demanding his ψυχή. The encounter between God and the man ends with an enigmatic question regarding the future ownership of the man's goods. The parable's conclusion (spoken by Jesus or a comment by the narrator?) appears to interpret the rich man's plans in theological terms.

These fundamental features of the parable raise questions and warrant closer scrutiny. Is there a reason that the rich man is not the subject in the parable's introductory line? In what ways does making the "land" the subject change one's reading of the parable? Why is God a character in the parable, and what is the function of God's appearance? Are there particular elements of this parable that help explain God's inclusion? How is one to read God's announcement in 12:20? Is God informing the man of his imminent death, or is God punishing the man? What specifically does the man do (or not do) that results in being labeled a fool (12:20)? In the Greek Bible, the term "fool" (ἄφρων) occurs almost exclusively in sapiential texts. Is this suggestive for how one should understand ἄφρων? Should the term be understood in light of its only other occurrence in Luke (11:40)?

¹⁰ God is mentioned in Luke's parable of the widow and judge (18:2, 4), but does not appear as a character in this parable. Nor is God a character in the subsequent parable (18:9-14), although the Pharisee and tax collector both pray to God (18:11, 13).

Who or what is the unspecified subject of ἀπαίτουσιν (12:20a)? Are they demanding the man's ψυχή or demanding it *back*? How should one translate the three occurrences of ψυχή ("self," "life," or "soul")? How is one to understand God's final question to the man (12:20b)? Is the question rhetorical? Is there an expected answer? In what precise way was the man not rich toward God (12:21)? What, in other words, does being rich toward God entail? Does Luke provide a positive corollary to the explicit critique in 12:20 and 12:21? Is there a constructive alternative to the rich man's folly and his failure to be rich toward God? A related question concerns the relationship between the parable proper (12:16-20) and its literary frame (12:13-15, 21, and more broadly, 12:13-34). Should the parable be interpreted apart from its current literary context? If not, does the literary context interpret the parable or vice versa?

Additional elements of the parable are unclear and raise further questions. Does Jesus address the parable to the crowd *and* the disciples? Or is the parable told only to the crowd? What is one to make of the similarities and differences between Luke's version and that found in Thomas? Does reading Luke's parable in light of Thomas significantly illumine either version?

Such questions are frequently ignored or cursorily treated by interpreters. The opening chapter of the dissertation will show that the neglect and marginalization of the parable of the Rich Fool is due to a mischaracterization of the parable as a simple and straightforward tale. Construing the parable in this manner is frequently the result of reading the parable through a "prophetic" lens. Interpreters who read the parable as a "prophetic" text typically conclude that it offers little more than a simple and

straightforward critique of avarice. This reading practice is the standard mode of understanding the parable among pre-modern and modern interpreters.

Yet reading the parable in this manner fails to acknowledge, among other things, the significance of the parable's own allusions and echoes to sapiential texts (Qoh 8:15; Sir 11:14-19; *I En.* 97:8-10). What is the significance of these resonances, and what function do they serve in the parable? Does Luke's parable engage these intertexts (or traditions represented by these intertexts), and if so, how? Finally, what is one to make of the fact that each of these three intertexts is both sapiential and concerned with the interplay of death and possessions? Interpreters who recognize the parable's allusions to texts such as Qoh 8:15 or Sir 11:14-19 often fail either to acknowledge the diverse range of perspectives within wisdom texts or to explain how the parable's connections to such texts might influence an understanding of the parable.

This dissertation will seek to demonstrate the multiple ways in which Luke's parable engages the sapiential conversation regarding the interplay of death and possessions. Reading the parable in concert with sapiential texts whose focus is the intersection of death and possessions makes sense given the allusions and echoes to wisdom texts within the parable (and its broader literary context), and provides insight to the kinds of questions engendered by a close reading of the parable. Such insight advances the conversation more than that offered by readers who do not read the parable in light of wisdom texts.

The operating assumption of this dissertation is that Luke's parable of the "Rich Fool" is situated within a sapiential conversation on death and possessions, and cannot be read properly apart from its dialogue with such wisdom texts. A close reading of four

Hellenistic Jewish texts will explicate this sapiential conversation and its contested nature (chapter two). Exploring Egyptian and Greco-Roman texts that treat these twinned motifs will broaden and nuance our understanding of this conversation (chapters three and four). I will situate Luke's parable of the Rich Fool within this spectrum of texts, showing how the parable participates in, illustrates, appropriates, and reconfigures this contested conversation (chapter five).¹¹ I will conclude the dissertation by considering two specific implications of this project for reading and understanding other Lukan parables.

1.2 The Early-Medieval Periods

Luke's parable of the Rich Fool receives minimal attention in the early and medieval periods.¹² One of the earliest appearances of the parable is in Tatian's Diatessaron. Luke 12:13-21 follows John 7:2-31 and precedes the episode of the "rich young ruler" (a conflation of the three Synoptics).¹³ The parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man occurs shortly thereafter.¹⁴ In light of the "rich young man" pericope, the rich man in Luke 12:16-21 seems to be positioned as someone who intentionally chooses his

¹¹ This dissertation treats the parable as it appears in its final form in Luke's gospel. I do not inquire, for instance, into the parable's *Sitz im Leben* in the ministry of Jesus, or what the parable may have looked like in its pre-Lukan stage.

¹² François Bovon, "The Reception and Use of the Gospel of Luke in the Second Century," in *Reading Luke: Interpretation, Reflection, Formation* (ed. Craig G. Bartholomew et al.; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 395, does not find knowledge of Luke's gospel among "most authors and apologists, especially those who were educated and orthodox ... until the middle of the second century." He finds that Justin is the first apologist who shows knowledge of Luke (395-96). For a critical response to Bovon, see Andrew Gregory, "Looking for Luke in the Second Century: A Dialogue with François Bovon," in *Reading Luke: Interpretation, Reflection, Formation* (ed. Craig G. Bartholomew et al.; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005): 401-415; cf. Andrew Gregory, *The Reception of Luke and Acts in the Period before Irenaeus* (WUNT, 2.169; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2003). Especially noteworthy is the parable's absence in Clement, *Who is the Rich Man That Shall be Saved?* Irenaeus does not discuss the parable despite his awareness of its existence (he cites 12:20 as a verse unique to Luke, *AH* 3.14.3).

¹³ Tatian, *Diatessaron* (*ANF*). Another one of the parable's earliest occurrences is the parallel version in Thomas's Gospel (*Gos. Thom.* 63). In chapter five, I compare the versions in Luke and Thomas.

¹⁴ It is unclear why Luke 12:13-21 was placed immediately following John 7:2-31, and how this placement might yield different readings of the parable.

wealth over God. Subsequent interpreters (pre-modern and modern) understand the parable's rich man in precisely this manner, and fault him for preferring wealth to God. Placing the parables of the "Rich Fool" and "Lazarus and the Rich Man" in close proximity also invites readers to consider whether the "rich fool" in 12:16-21 neglects to care for the poor. Readings which highlight the man's lack of care for the poor also become popular throughout the parable's history of interpretation.¹⁵ The juxtaposition of the parables of the "rich fool" and "Lazarus and the rich man" (Luke 16:19-31) begins a trend that is repeated frequently by later interpreters.¹⁶ The absence in the Diatessaron of the subsequent discourse (Luke 12:22-34) may explain the scarce attention interpreters give to the link between the rich man and anxiety.¹⁷

Most early and medieval interpreters who cite the parable refer to only a portion of it, and do so in the context of a discussion on luxury. Interpreters cite, or refer to, verses from the parable to bolster their efforts in combating luxurious living. Clement of Alexandria cites 12:19-20 as one of several texts in his diatribe against those who "squander meretriciously wealth on what is disgraceful; and in their love for ostentation disfigure God's gifts, emulating the art of the evil one." He identifies such people with the rich man in the parable.¹⁸ By citing Luke 12:20 with Matt 16:26 ("For what if a person gains the whole world . . ."), Clement shows that he understands the rich man's

¹⁵ Cyprian, Cyril, and Erasmus each refer to the rich man's failure to care for the poor. See below for details.

¹⁶ I am not arguing for literary dependence by these readers on the *Diatessaron*.

¹⁷ Tertullian, *Or.* 6, is an exception. Luther also links the parable to the motif of anxiety [*Commentary on Isaiah*; vol. 16; *Luther's Works: Lectures on Isaiah* (ed. Jaroslav Pelikan; Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1969)].

¹⁸ Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor* 2.13 (ANF).

fault to be related to an enormous accumulation of goods (*Strom.* 4.6).¹⁹ Cassian cites Luke 12:20 in support of his admonition against the “disease of covetousness.”²⁰ When read in this manner, the parable is a simple illustration that warns against the twin dangers of greed and luxury.

Cyprian also reads the parable as a warning against luxury. He cites Luke 12:19 to support his argument that “love of money is the root of all evil,” and 12:20 to aver that riches are the “root of seducing evils.”²¹ He claims that the rich fool was “rejoicing in his stores” (*Dom. or.* 4.20). Cyprian also cites 12:20 along with several other texts to warn against the dangers of being enslaved to money (*Eleem.* 8.13).²² He similarly adduces Luke 12:20 in conjunction with a series of other texts to assert that “the lust of possessing, and money, are not to be sought for” (*Test.* 12.2.61). For Cyprian, the parable points to the potential danger of wealth. People who have “coveted after [it], ... have made shipwreck from the faith, and have pieced themselves through with many sorrows.”

Yet by reading the parable in light of its broader literary context, Cyprian finds both a denunciation of wealth and a positive recommendation regarding the use of possessions. On the one hand, the parable teaches that riches are “full of peril; that in them is the root of seducing evils, that deceive the blindness of the human mind by a hidden deception.” It is precisely for this reason that God “rebukes the rich fool, who thinks of his earthly wealth, and boasts himself in the abundance of his overflowing

¹⁹ Unless otherwise indicated, references to patristic authors are to Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (10 vols.; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994) [1885-1887].

²⁰ Cassian, *Institutes* 7.30.

²¹ Note the reference to 1 Tim 6:10.

²² In the opening to his treatise “On Works and Alms” (VIII), written ca. 254, Cyprian writes: “He powerfully exhorts to the manifestation of faith by works, and enforces the wisdom of offerings to the church and of bounty to the poor as the best investment of a Christian’s estate. This he proves out of many Scriptures.”

harvests.” On the other hand, Cyprian observes that “the Lord tells us that he becomes perfect and complete who sells all his goods, and distributes them for the use of the poor, and so lays up for himself treasure in heaven.” Cyprian thus sees in Luke 12:33 a positive alternative to the example of the rich man in the parable.

Cyprian’s attention to the broader literary context is also evident in his treatise *Works and Almsgiving*:

You do not remember what God answered to the rich man, who boasted with a foolish exultation of the abundance of his exuberant harvest: ‘Thou fool,’ said He, ‘this night thy soul is required of you . . . “Why do you watch in loneliness over your riches? Why for your punishment do you heap up the burden of your patrimony, that, in proportion as you are rich in this world, you may become poor to God? Divide your returns with the Lord your God; share your gains with Christ; make Christ a partner with you in your earthly possessions, that He also may make you a fellow-heir with Him in His heavenly kingdom (*Eleem.* 8.13).

Cyprian here reads the parable in light of 12:21, and accordingly identifies the man’s storage of earthly possessions as poverty toward God.

Cyril of Alexandria also takes into account the parable’s literary context. He understands the parable to be an illustration of the principle in Luke 12:15, that one’s life does not consist in one’s possessions.²³ Cyril observes elements in the parable apart from greed and luxury. Like Cyprian, he notes the solitary nature of the rich man, identifying the man’s plans to enjoy the fruits of his field by himself as one of his faults. Cyprian’s other critique, that the man fails to raise his eyes to God and does not cherish love for the poor, is possibly due to reading the parable in conjunction with Luke 12:21 and 12:33.

Few interpreters address the motif of death in the parable. Chrysostom is an exception. In an admonition to give away one’s riches, he cites the parable’s conclusion

²³ Cyril of Alexandria, *The Gospel of Saint Luke* (trans. R. Payne Smith; n.p.: Studion Publishers, 1983), 360-61.

to stress that death's timing is uncertain, and that the "tenure" of possessions is insecure (*Eutrop.* 2.5). Chrysostom elsewhere refers to the parable to make the point that a soul, once torn from the body, can no longer wander the earth (*Hom. Matt.* 28.3). The motif of death is not explicitly raised in the *Recognitions of Clement* (10.45), but is intimated in its use of the parable to support the argument that rich people should not delay their conversion.

Interpreters frequently read the parable in light of other biblical texts. When the parable is read this way it is most often understood in light of prophetic texts. Tertullian finds the manner in which the rich fool heard God speak to him to be the same as when king Hezekiah heard from Isaiah "the sad doom of his kingdom" (*Marc.* 28; cf. Isaiah 39).²⁴ Jerome links the character in Luke's parable to Nabal of 1 Sam 25:38 (*Epist.* 125.10). Gregory Nazianzen berates those who oppress the poor, citing both Isaiah 58 and Luke 12. For Gregory, Isaiah 58 refers to people who show no pity to the widow or orphan, and the rich man in the parable is "the most unjust of all."²⁵

Reading the parable in light of prophetic texts often results in a focus upon the issue of luxury or greed. Cyril places the brother's request for Jesus to intervene in the inheritance dispute (12:13-15) into conversation with Amos 5:11 and Isa 5:8. He thereby reads Luke 12:15 through a prophetic lens, and concludes that the primary point of this dialogue and Jesus' response is the danger of covetousness.²⁶

The remarks of Clement of Alexandria on parables and prophets are suggestive of how some patristic authors may have seen a connection between parabolic and prophetic

²⁴ Tertullian comments extensively on the three parables in Luke 15 but does not engage substantively the Rich Fool parable. For his treatment of all three Luke 15 parables, see *Paen.* 8; *Pud.* 7-9. For a treatment of the parables of the Lost Sheep and Lost Coin, see *Marc.* 4.32.

²⁵ Gregory Nazianzen, *On His Father's Silence* 18.

²⁶ Cyril of Alexandria, *Luke*, 360.

discourse. Clement asserts that the “parabolic style of Scripture” is “of the greatest antiquity,” and that this style “abounded most, as was to be expected, in the prophets” (*Strom.* 6:15).²⁷ Clement avers that neither the prophets nor Jesus “announced the divine mysteries simply so as to be easily apprehended by all and sundry, but express them in parables” (*Strom.* 6.15). Jesus spoke prophecy “in parables” and “the holy mysteries of the prophecies are veiled in the parables” (*Strom.* 6.15).²⁸ These views provide a possible reason for the prevailing practice of reading Luke’s parable in concert with prophetic texts.

Only two interpreters from this period cite the parable in conjunction with a wisdom text. Athanasius adduces Qoh 9:12 (“One does not know his time”) and Luke 12:20 to support his claim that no one knows one’s time of death (*Fug.* 15). On two separate occasions Augustine juxtaposes Luke’s parable with a psalm. In his commentary on Psalm 49,²⁹ he suggests that Luke 12:20 fulfills Ps 49:16-17 (“Fear not, though a man be made rich, and though the glory of his house be multiplied: for when he shall die he shall not receive anything, nor shall his glory descend together with him”) (*Enarrat. Ps.* 2.6). The death of a rich person appears to be the theme which links these texts together for Augustine. Augustine also finds similarities between Luke 12:20 and Ps 39:6 (“... heaps up treasures but does not know who shall gather them”) (*Trin.* 14.14.19). Here Augustine highlights the uncertainty associated with who will inherit one’s goods after

²⁷ Cited in Warren S. Kissinger, *The Parables of Jesus: A History of Interpretation and Bibliography* (ATLA Bibliography Series; vol. 4; Metuchen, NJ: American Theological Library Association, 1979).

²⁸ The prophecies are veiled in this manner because it is not suitable for “all to understand.” Clement may likely have been influenced by Mark 4 and Isaiah 6 here.

²⁹ Psalm 49 is widely regarded as a wisdom psalm. See, e.g., Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), 49.

one dies. In each instance, Augustine observes the presence of the intersection of the motifs of death and possessions, both in the parable and in the two Psalms he cites.³⁰

Little attention is given to the parable of the ‘Rich Fool’ in the medieval era. It is one of the only parables unique to Luke that was not included in the first printed missal for the Roman rite (published in Milan in 1474). Its absence in the list is noteworthy given the presence of most of Luke’s other parables (the Lost Sheep, Samaritan, Friend at Midnight, Lost Coin, Father and Two Sons, Steward, Rich Man and Lazarus, and Pharisee and the Publican).³¹ In his extensive study of allegorical treatments of parables in the medieval period, Stephen Wailes concludes that medieval sources “contain no thorough allegory” for the parable of the Rich Fool. He finds that medieval interpreters treat the parable as an “illustration of the dangers of avarice . . . and an exhortation to almsgiving.”³² These twin concerns mirror two of the predominant emphases given to the parable by interpreters in the early church.

In summary, most early and medieval interpreters read the parable as a moral critique of avarice. It is unclear whether reading Luke’s parable in this manner is a necessary consequence of placing the parable into conversation with prophetic texts (in

³⁰ Augustine cites most of the “Rich Fool” parable in a sermon on Matt 19:21 (“Go, sell what you have and give to the poor.”) (*Serm.* 36.15). Curiously, instead of “eat, drink, be merry” (12:19), Augustine reads: “You have much goods; take thy pleasure.” This difference in phrasing makes identification of the allusion with Qoh 8:15 more difficult. (In a separate sermon on Luke 12:15, he does cite Luke 12:19 as “eat, drink, be merry” (*Serm.* 57)). In a different sermon, Augustine links the rich man in the parable to “. . . that other luxurious, proud, rich man,” referring to Luke’s parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man (*Serm.* 36.16). In a sermon on Luke 12:15, Augustine writes that the rich man had “no regard to the wants of the poor” (*Serm.* 57.6). Although these last two remarks occur in different sermons, it is possible that his pairing of the parable with that in Luke 16:19-31 helps explain his comment regarding the man’s lack of regard for the needs of the poor. Augustine understands God’s speech to the rich man as God’s attempt to “censure” the man’s “most foolish covetousness.” (*Serm. Dom.* 2.33). Augustine makes this comment in the context of his argument that it is not unworthy of God to speak to the devil since God even spoke to that rich man (in Luke 12:16-21).

³¹ Stephen L. Wailes, *Medieval Allegories of Jesus’ Parables* (Publications of the UCLA Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies 23; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 6-7.

³² *Ibid.*, 220.

which avarice is frequently castigated) or whether the parable is placed into dialogue with prophetic texts because it is understood to be chiefly concerned with avarice. In either case the result is the same: attention is chiefly focused on the motifs of greed and luxury. By contrast, death is rarely mentioned as an important element in the parable.

Moreover, though some wisdom texts are adduced as parallels to the parable, no one mentions the parable's own allusions to Qoh 8:15 or Sir 11:14-19. This oversight also narrows the focus to greed and possessions. The predominant attention in the early and medieval periods on reading the parable in light of prophetic texts (rather than wisdom texts) helps explain the dominant focus on the motif of possessions and the corresponding neglect of the theme of death.

1.3 Reformation

Erasmus, Luther, and Calvin continue to see in the parable a warning against the dangers of greed and luxury. Yet these readers also display an increased attention to the role of death and anxiety in the parable.

Erasmus focuses upon the role of possessions in the parable. He follows earlier interpreters by faulting the rich man for responding to the growth of his fields with a selfishness that did not consider the needs of his poor neighbors.³³ Rather than thinking about how he might meet such needs, the rich man becomes worried about storing his goods. Erasmus suggests that if the rich man had been guided by love, then love would have shown him the needs of those around him. The rich man's lands are a blessing from God, and are accordingly to be used for generosity. Yet the rich man preferred to be guided by folly rather than love.

³³ Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus: Paraphrase on Luke 11-24* (trans. Jane E. Phillips; New Testament Scholarship; ed. Robert D. Sider; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 33.

Erasmus also sees in the parable a focus upon death. He modifies God's speech to the rich man, so that God chastises him for assuming that he has many years left to live.³⁴ "You fool, since life itself is not guaranteed you, why are you storing up for years to come? For only in this life can you enjoy the things you are putting away, and no one is guaranteed life for even a single day. Why are you promising yourself many years?" Erasmus may be influenced here by the rich man's soliloquy (in which he anticipates enjoying his goods for many years to come) and the insistence in 12:22-34 that one cannot prolong one's life. The speech Erasmus inserts into God's mouth highlights the uncertain timing of death, moving it to the forefront of the parable.

In Erasmus's version of the speech, God informs the rich man that his possessions will no longer belong to him but rather to his "heir, or to anyone else who seizes them."³⁵ Erasmus here answers a question the parable asks (Luke 12:20b) but leaves unanswered ("And the things you prepared, to whom will they be?"). The man could have acquired "spiritual riches," which would have accompanied him into death, if only he had disbursed his wealth to others.³⁶ Erasmus concludes his commentary by reiterating that God desires the rich to give relief to the needy. Those who become monetarily poor in giving away their goods are "more blessedly rich."³⁷ It is possible that Erasmus is influenced by Luke 12:33 in which alms is prescribed as an ideal use of goods. Though he does not mention any parallels to wisdom texts, Erasmus draws attention to the motifs of death and possessions in the parable.

³⁴ Ibid, 34.

³⁵ Ibid, 34.

³⁶ Here Erasmus may be thinking of Luke 12:33-34 and the command to give away one's alms and possessions. See also Luke 16:9-13.

³⁷ Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus*, 34.

The parable of the ‘Rich Fool’ is one of the only parables unique to Luke on which Martin Luther apparently did not preach. The absence of any extant sermons on this parable is noteworthy since Luther did preach on the parables of the Samaritan, the Lost Coin, the Steward, Lazarus and the Rich Man, and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector.³⁸ Luther’s remarks on the parable of the Rich Fool appear within the context of comments on other biblical texts, and he highlights themes in the parable that are germane to these other texts.

On two occasions Luther stresses the role of inheritance in the parable. In doing so he echoes Qoheleth’s stress on the twin inability to take goods beyond death and the uncertainty regarding who would inherit one’s goods.³⁹ Of the rich man Luther remarks: “Thus he lost the real treasure; and he had to surrender the property he had accumulated, and surrender it so pitiably that he did not even know who would get it.”⁴⁰ After a general maxim regarding how “seldom great fortunes are accumulated in a God-pleasing manner,”⁴¹ Luther again addresses the frequency with which inheritances are left to people one does not know, and thereafter quickly dissipated or spent.⁴² In a lecture on 1 Timothy, Luther again highlights the impossibility of determining the recipient of one’s inheritance.⁴³ Luther’s interest in some of the parable’s legal implications also reflects a concern for the fragility of wealth.

³⁸ See Eugene F. A. Klug, ed., *Sermons of Martin Luther: The House Postils* (vols. 1-3; trans. Eugene F. A. Klug, et al.; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996).

³⁹ Qoheleth complains about the uncertainties involved in leaving one’s inheritance to another (Qoh 2:18-19, 21), and the possibility of leaving it to a stranger (Qoh 6:1-2). Both texts will be discussed in more detail in chapter two.

⁴⁰ Luther, 174.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 174.

⁴² “If someone has been saving for a long time, therefore, and he is asked who will get his savings, he has to answer that he does not know” (*Ibid*, 175).

⁴³ Citing God’s question to the rich man (Luke 12:20b) in a discussion of 1 Tim 6:7 (“For we brought nothing into this world”) and Job 1:21 (“Naked I came from my mother’s womb and naked I will

Luther twice associates Luke's parable with uncertainty regarding the future. In *Fourteen Consolations*, Luther compares the rich man in Luke's parable to non-Christians who have no real hope since "for them all things are uncertain."⁴⁴ Though Christians must also "remain uncertain about the future," they are able to hope "with a sure hope which sustains them in the meanwhile."⁴⁵ The theme of the future also appears in *Trade and Usury*, in which Luther maintains that God has "condemned this presumption about the future and disregard for him."⁴⁶ He finds Luke's parable to be an example of such presumption.⁴⁷ Luther does not discuss here the theme of wealth, but the fact that he refers to the parable within *Trade and Usury* suggests that he finds the parable to be potentially relevant to issues related to wealth and possessions.

In other writings, Luther does address the role of wealth in the parable. On the one hand, Luther's views comport with previous interpreters who highlighted greed. Like Erasmus, he also observes the theme of death in the parable. In a comment on Matt 6:19-21,⁴⁸ Luther speaks of "rich bellies" who serve Mammon their entire lives and who, in

return there"), Luther notes: "Consider where you come from. Before our eyes we see examples, but we are blindness itself. One gathers up treasure and doesn't know for whom. He is intent on his gathering. If he is seeking gain, for whom? He doesn't know." He continues: "The title 'fool' stands written above all treasures. Many parents have gathered for their children, but who got it? After all, the saying does not deceive: 'Even a parent must take a chance; whether his child will receive it, no one can tell. It very frequently happens that someone else gets it.' Why then do we heap up?" See Martin Luther, *1 Timothy* [vol. 28; *Luther's Works: Commentaries on 1 Corinthians 7, 1 Corinthians 15, Lectures on 1 Timothy* (Hilton C. Oswald, ed.; Saint Louis: Concordia, 1973)], 370. Luther thus echoes the same concerns that Qoheleth cites as one of the reasons for finding life meaningless.

⁴⁴ Martin Luther, *Fourteen Consolations* (trans. Martin H. Bertram; vol. 42 of *Luther's Works: Devotional Writings* [Martin O. Dietrich, ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969]), 148. Luther contrasts this lack of hope with the fact that "God has not forsaken the sons of men, but comforts them with the hope that the evils will pass and that good things shall come."

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁴⁶ Martin Luther, *Trade and Usury* (trans. Charles M. Jacobs; vol. 45 of *Luther's Works: The Christian and Society* (Walther I. Brandt, ed.; Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), 254-55.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 255. In support of his view that one should not speculate about the future he cites Acts 1:7 and Prov 27:1. He states that one can find agreement with this notion throughout the book of Ecclesiastes.

⁴⁸ Martin Luther, *Sermon on the Mount*, [trans. Jaroslav Pelikan; vol. 21 of *Luther's Works: The Sermon on the Mount and the Magnificat* (Jaroslav Pelikan, ed.; Saint Louis: Concordia, 1956)], 12-13: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in

their death, “found nothing whatsoever.”⁴⁹ He equates such an outcome with that described in Ps 76:5 (“All the rich men sank into sleep, and they found nothing in their hands”). People who have “served Mammon all their life and who have wronged and harmed many other people on his account, and who have despised the Word of God” are unable to use Mammon in their time of death.⁵⁰ In death

their eyes are opened for the first time. They catch sight of another world, and they go groping around for the supplies they have stored up. But they cannot find a thing, and their passing is ignominious and empty. In their anxiety and fear they forget about what they have laid up, and they do not find anything in heaven either. What happens to them *is just what Christ describes in Luke 12:16-21*.⁵¹

On the other hand, Luther departs from previous readings of the parable by seeing in it an illustration of poor people’s greed. He describes the rich man’s monologue as “the peasant’s song that all the greedy bellies sing.” Luther’s focus on the man’s avarice, coupled with his belief that poor people are the greediest of all, leads him to apply the parable to the poor. The rich man’s problem, Luther insists, is not his wealth.⁵²

In his commentary on the parable, Jean Calvin focuses upon issues related to death and possessions. He finds three primary messages in the parable: the warning of the danger of covetousness; the demonstration that the “present life is short and transitory;”

and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

⁴⁹ Ibid, 174.

⁵⁰ Luther, in *Commentary on Isaiah* [vol. 16; *Luther’s Works: Lectures on Isaiah* (Jaroslav Pelikan, ed.; Saint Louis: Concordia, 1969)], 341, comments on Isa 38:16 (“O Lord, if by these things men live”): “For the abundance of all things is nothing apart from the Word, as we see in the case of the rich man who was enlarging his granary.”

⁵¹ Luther, *Sermon on the Mount*, 174. Emphasis mine.

⁵² Luther, *Sermon on the Mount*, 12-13, comments on Matt 5:3: “There is many a beggar getting bread at our door more arrogant and wicked than any rich man, and many a miserable, stingy peasant who is harder to get along with than any lord or prince.” Again: “. . . the poorest and most miserable beggars are the worst and most desperate rascals and dare to commit every kind of mischief and evil tricks, which fine, upstanding people, rich citizens or lords and princes, do not do.” These remarks may reflect influence of the peasant revolt in 1525, to which he responded harshly. What resulted in the published commentary on the Sermon on the Mount (1532) was initially preached in 1530.

and the message that “riches are of no avail for prolonging life.”⁵³ For Calvin, the parable was “intended” to show that

vain are the deliberations and foolish attempts of those who, trusting to the abundance of their wealth, do not rely on God alone, and are not satisfied with their own share, or prepared for whatever may befall them; and finally, that such persons will suffer the penalty of their own folly.⁵⁴

In his emphasis on the dangers of covetousness, Calvin echoes the interpretive trends in the early period. The rich man, “agitated by insatiable desire,” enlarges his barns “as if his belly, which had been filled with his former barns, had not got enough.”⁵⁵ The man’s greed shows that he “does not comprehend the proper use of an abundant produce.”⁵⁶ Calvin does not, however, clarify what this alternative use might entail.

Calvin does not cite any wisdom texts as pertinent to the parable, but he does note that the phrase “eat, drink, enjoy” (Luke 12:19b) is a “Hebrew idiom,” adding that “there is greater force and propriety than the words appear at first.” Unfortunately, his identification of 12:19b as a “Hebrew idiom” does not illuminate the parable or influence his reading of it. He does not specify the source of this Hebrew idiom, nor does he clarify what this “greater force” is. He reads 12:19b as an indication of the man’s sufficiency, claiming that he “no longer remembers that he is a man, but swells into pride by relying on his abundance.”⁵⁷

Calvin considers the parable and its meaning to be fairly simple and straightforward. In the parable, there is “nothing here but what is perfectly common, and

⁵³ Jean Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (vol. 2; trans. William Pringle; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 148.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 150-151.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 149. Calvin considers the man’s storage of his produce to be a positive character trait. The man is instead condemned for his “ravenous desire [which] like a deep whirlpool, swallows up and devours many barns.”

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 149.

what every man has constantly in his mouth,” namely that accumulating great wealth cannot prevent one’s life from suddenly being taken away.⁵⁸ Two aspects of this comment are noteworthy. First, Calvin’s claim regarding the simplicity of Luke’s parable anticipates assumptions (explicit and tacit) that become common in subsequent centuries. Second, like Luther and Erasmus, Calvin highlights the role of death, and its relationship with possessions. The rich man, avers Calvin, “lengthens out his expectation of life in proportion to his large income, and drives far away from him the remembrance of death.”⁵⁹ Many interpreters follow Calvin in regarding the parable as a simple tale. Far fewer attend to the motif of death in the parable.⁶⁰

1.4 Nineteenth Century

David Friedrich Strauss exemplifies Calvin’s claim regarding the simple and straightforward nature of the parable. The parable’s perceived simplicity may explain the one sentence Strauss spends describing it, compared with the two pages he devotes to the parable of the “Unjust Steward.”⁶¹ He lists the parable as one that is unique to Luke and notes the existence of a parallel text in Wis 11:17ff.⁶² Strauss claims that this parable, in addition to other parables unique to Luke (e.g. the ‘Good Samaritan’, ‘Friend at Midnight’, and ‘Widow and Judge’), has a “definite, clear signification” and a “tolerably consistent connexion.” His one comment on the parable echoes Calvin’s perception of the parable as revealing nothing but what is “perfectly common.” Like Calvin, Strauss’s

⁵⁸ Ibid, 148.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 149.

⁶⁰ A potentially fruitful project would be inquiring into whether the attention to death in Erasmus, Luther, and Calvin is a reflection of the socio-cultural climate in sixteenth century Europe.

⁶¹ David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (trans. from the fourth German edition by George Eliot; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 349-50.

⁶² Ibid, 349.

remark reflects and anticipates the primary way in which the parable will be understood, as a “clear” story requiring little if any interpretation.

Just such an interpretation appears in Alexander Balmain Bruce’s massive work on the parables. Bruce chooses not to examine the parable of the Rich Fool in his self-titled “systematic” study since he considers it to be of no “independent didactic importance.”⁶³ The parable’s absence in Bruce’s study is significant given the (perceived) stature of his work at the time.⁶⁴ For Bruce, the parable “simply teaches in concrete lively form a moral commonplace” and contains “no new or abstruse lesson.” He avers that such parables were not distinctive to Jesus and can be found among the Rabbis. Jesus, he writes, speaks the parable of the rich fool as a “Jewish moralist.”⁶⁵ Bruce prefers instead to focus on parables that “embody truths deep, unfamiliar or unwelcome,” those which reflect “mysteries of the Kingdom.”⁶⁶ Bruce thus continues a trajectory which sees little in the parable other than a “simplistic” tale.

1.4.1 Adolf Jülicher: A Turning Point in Scholarship?

In some ways, Adolf Jülicher anticipates future scholarship on the parable of the “Rich Fool.” Such is the case with his classification of the parable (and three others) as a *Beispielergählung*.⁶⁷ In his treatment of these four “example stories,” he gives the least

⁶³ Alexander Balmain Bruce, *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ. A Systematic and Critical Study of the Parables of our Lord* (Third Revised Edition; New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1898), 9.

⁶⁴ Adolf Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu* (2 vols; Aufl. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], vol. 1, 1888; vols. 1-2, 1899; reprint, 1910), I:300, lauds Bruce for certain aspects of his work. Gerant Vaughan Jones, *The Art and Truth of the Parables: A Study in Their Literary Form and Modern Interpretation* (London: SPCK, 1964), 9, wrote in 1964 (!) that Bruce’s work “has not been surpassed in English.”

⁶⁵ Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching*, 9.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 9.

⁶⁷ Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*, II: viii. The other three are the “Samaritan,” “Lazarus and the Rich Man,” and the “Pharisee and the Tax Collector.”

attention to the “Foolish Rich Man.” His remarks on the parable focus on grammar and textual parallels.⁶⁸ He notes that φάγε and πίε (12:19) occur in Luke 7:34 and Job 1:18 to denote a feast “without an adjoining evil sense.”⁶⁹ He understands εὐφραίνου as a “low level hedonism (*niedriger Genusssucht*),” a “genuine serenity (*echte Heiterkeit*).”⁷⁰ The rich man, he avers, did not engage in continual eating and drinking for years on end.⁷¹

Jülicher is one of the first to identify Qoh 8:15 as a parallel text to Luke 12:19, noting that both share the same three verbs in common (ἐσθίω, πίνω, εὐφραίνω).⁷² Like Calvin, Jülicher fails to mention why or how the parallel he identifies is significant for understanding Luke’s parable.⁷³ He establishes a pattern in which the identification of a parallel text is presented as meaningful in its own right.⁷⁴

Jülicher anticipates Bultmann and others by questioning whether 12:21 was originally part of the parable. Of significance is his presupposition that 12:21, if shown not to be original, should not be used to illumine the parable. Although he cannot find a “clear motive for cancelling” 12:21 from Luke, he finds it unhelpful in understanding the parable.⁷⁵

⁶⁸ Ibid, II:611, cites, for example, certain psalms which contain speeches to one’s own person.

⁶⁹ Ibid, II:611.

⁷⁰ Ibid, II:611.

⁷¹ Ibid, II:611.

⁷² Ibid, II: 611-12. He also notes the similarity with Tob 7:10 (φάγε, πίε καὶ ἠδέως γίνου).

⁷³ He does cite the Qoh 8:15 parallel to suggest that Rönsch may be incorrect in thinking Luke based the rich man’s speech on Roman funeral rites formula (*Parentationsformel*) (II:611).

⁷⁴ Abraham Malherbe’s criticism of the “uncritical use of parallels” (in reference to Hellenistic moral philosophers and the New Testament) is a propos. See Abraham J. Malherbe, “Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament,” in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II.26.I (ed. Wolfgang Haase (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1992), 275-76, speaks of citing parallels “without allowing the exposition of those books to be substantially influenced by the parallels.”

⁷⁵ Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden*, II:614, considers it a “vague and quite unnecessary” saying that one could omit it easily and “with pleasure.”

In many other ways, Jülicher's interpretation comports with previous ways of reading the parable.⁷⁶ Although his classification of the parable as a *Beispielergählung* is often heralded as a monumental shift in the history of parable interpretation, such classification does not significantly alter how the parable of the "Rich Fool" is treated by subsequent scholars. Jülicher's (allegedly) stark departure from reading parables allegorically has had far less impact upon the interpretation of Luke 12:16-21, perhaps since this parable (up until Jülicher's time) was not commonly read allegorically. Reading Luke 12:16-21 as an "example" to be avoided closely parallels how the parable was read in the early church. Jülicher's description of the story as "highly simple" is little different than the remarks of Calvin and Bruce regarding the parable's complete lack of complexity.⁷⁷

To a degree, Calvin anticipates Jülicher by stating that his goal is to find the "one" primary meaning of each parable.⁷⁸ Calvin also shares Jülicher's disdain for speculative readings: "To inquire with great exactness into every minute part of a parable is an absurd mode of philosophizing."⁷⁹ If anything, Jülicher's classification of the parable as a *Beispielergählung* merely provided a *terminus technicus* to what was already an established pattern for treating this parable.

⁷⁶ For an anticipation of Jülicher's rejection of allegory and his focus upon one primary meaning of the parable, see C. E. van Koetsveld, *De Gelijkenissen van den Zaligmaker* (2 vols.; Utrecht: Schoonhoven, 1869); E. P. Gould, *St Mark* (International Critical Commentary; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896), 74.

⁷⁷ Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden*, II: 608.

⁷⁸ Calvin, *Harmony*, 176.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 176.

1.5 Modern Readers

1.5.1 Continuing the ‘Early-Medieval-Reformation’ Paradigm

The treatment of the “rich fool” parable in the twentieth century is highly consonant with that in the early, medieval, and Reformation periods. Many modern parable scholars fail to treat the parable. It is absent, for example, in Dodd’s work on the parables.⁸⁰ Nor is it one of the eleven parables that Linnemann analyzes. In her brief remarks on the parable, she re-enforces the notion that discovering the parable’s message requires little thinking or imagination on the part of the reader.⁸¹

The perception of the parable as simple and straightforward is no doubt one of the reasons for its lack of attention by past and present scholars.⁸² As noted above, Jülicher’s designation of the parable as a *Beispielergählung* merely provided a *de jure* classification for what was already a *de facto* practice. But the importance of his classification is significant since it has seemed to provide further warrant for scholars to dismiss the parable as a “simple” tale.⁸³ Many, indeed, have followed Jülicher’s classification of the

⁸⁰ Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*.

⁸¹ Linnemann, *Parables*, 4, calls Luke’s parable an “illustration,” which she distinguishes from “similitudes and parables.” Whereas a parable adduces a “correspondence (*analogia*), the illustration produces an “example (*exemplum*)” (5). A parable requires one to transfer the narrative’s content to “another level (from ‘picture’ to ‘reality’).” The illustration, on the other hand, “refers directly to the reality and only needs to be generalized” (5).

⁸² See p. 1, ft. 1.

⁸³ The parable is absent in most Theologies of the New Testament. Adolf Schlatter, *The History of the Christ: The Foundation for New Testament Theology* (trans. Andreas J. Köstenberger; Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997 [1923]), 166-70, twice refers to the parable in a section entitled “Jesus’ Dispute with the Rich.” He joins other interpreters in understanding the potential danger of wealth as the parable’s chief concern (167). Schlatter anticipates a future scholarly emphasis with his identification of the rich man’s fault as his willful hedonism. Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (trans. Kendrick Grobel; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1951 and 1955), I:14, 17, 24, refers to several other Lukan parables (“Prodigal Son,” “Pharisee and Tax Collector,” “Widow and Judge,” “Samaritan”), but does not mention the parable of the Rich Fool. Hans Conzelmann, *Die Mitte Der Zeit* (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1953), does not address the parable in his work on Lukan theology. Werner Georg Kümmel, *The Theology of the New Testament: According to its Major Witnesses: Jesus, Paul, John* (trans. John E. Steely; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973), 40, refers to the parable once to support his claim that Jesus conceived of God as one who would play the role of judge in the future. George Bradford Caird, *New Testament*

parable as an “example story.”⁸⁴ Jeffrey Tucker is one of the few to reject his classification.⁸⁵ Common to modern interpreters who do attend to the parable is an emphasis on the subject of wealth and avarice. Far less attention is given to the motif of death, the relationship between death and possessions, and the parable’s own allusions to wisdom texts.

Rudolf Bultmann follows Jülicher in calling the parable an “exemplary story,” one that has “no figurative element at all.”⁸⁶ Bultmann’s primary concern is the parable’s tradition history.⁸⁷ He does not cite any parallel Jewish wisdom texts, yet he does refer to

Theology (ed. L. D. Hurst; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), does not cite the parable, but he neglects most of Luke’s parables (despite his reliance on Luke as the primary text upon which he constructs his theology).

⁸⁴ So, e.g., Erich Klostermann and Hugo Gressmann, *Das Lukasevangelium* (HNT 2.1; Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1919), 497; Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (trans. John Marsh; Oxford: Blackwell, 1963), 177-78; Egbert Seng, “Der Reiche Tor: Eine Untersuchung von Lk. xii 16-21 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung form- und motivgeschichtlicher Aspekte,” *NovT* 20 (1978), 141, 151-52; Wolfgang Wiefel, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlaganstalt, 1988), 236; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV): Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (AB 28A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1985), II:971; François Bovon, *L’Évangile Selon Saint Luc 9,51-14,35* (Commentaire du Nouveau Testament Deuxième Série IIIb; Geneva: Labor et fides, 1996), 273.

⁸⁵ Jeffrey T. Tucker, *Example Stories: Perspectives on Four Parables in the Gospel of Luke* (JSNTSS 162; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998). Tucker’s dissertation demonstrates many of the problems and misguided assumptions in creating a distinction between the categories “parable” and “example story.” He finds that “the categorical distinction between *Parabel* and *Beispielzählung* does not withstand scrutiny,” and that the use of the category “example story” is unhelpful (42). Despite his significant repudiation of Jülicher’s classification system, few have followed Tucker in rejecting “example story” as an appropriate category for parables. A recent example is Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 13-15, 350-52, 397, who prefers using the term “single indirect parable.” For another rejection of the category of “example story,” see Ernst Baasland, “Zum Beispiel der Beispielzählungen: Zur Formenlehre der Gleichnisse und zur Methodik der Gleichnisauslegung,” *NovT* 28 (1986), 219. John Dominic Crossan, “Parable and Example in the Teaching of Jesus,” *NTS* 18 (1971-72): 285-307, argues that when originally told these four narratives were parables, but secondary additions have resulted in their present form as example narratives.

⁸⁶ Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 177-78.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 324, claims, that Luke brought the parable, the preceding saying about inheritance, and the following sayings about anxiety together into one unified section, 12:13-34. “It cannot be doubted,” he writes, “that Luke uses the apophthegm in 12:13f as an introduction to the parable (193; cf. 335). He sees 12:13-14 as a unitary composition since “Jesus’ saying is intelligible only in reference to the question” (23). He classifies 12:13-14 as a scholastic dialogue (54). He lists Luke 10:30-37 and 13:6-9 as other instances where apophthegms are used as a frame for parables (or exemplary stories) (61). The dominical saying in 12:15 is formed as a transition from 12:13-14 to the parable (335; cf. 192-93, 23). The parable’s application, beginning with οὕτως, is secondary, possibly does not occur in Luke’s original text, and “is typical of secondary interpretation of similitude and parable” (178). The absence of this application in

a parallel in *Thousand and One Nights*.⁸⁸ The title he gives to Luke 12:13-34, “attitude to possessions in this world,” reflects the standard perception that the parable’s chief concern is wealth.⁸⁹

Joachim Jeremias’s interest in the parable’s tradition history leads him to see an emphasis on death and possessions in Jesus’ original parable. The parable’s original eschatological warning was directed to a “fool obsessed by his possessions and unconscious of the sword of Damocles hanging over his head.”⁹⁰ This initial focus has been altered, he contends, to have a “direct hortatory application.”⁹¹ He cites Luke 12:21 as the primary example of the parable’s shift from the “eschatological” to the “hortatory,”⁹² claiming that 12:21 moralizes the parable, blunting the “sharp edge of its warning.”⁹³ The parable has been “transformed into a warning against the wrong use of possessions.”⁹⁴

Codex Bezae and other manuscripts suggests to Bultmann that it may have been lacking in Luke’s original text. For Jülicher’s opinion, see *Gleichnisse*, II:614.

⁸⁸ “A certain king, who had collected rich treasures, was summoned by the angel of death at the very moment when he was sitting at a luxurious table, and saying to himself: ‘Soul, you have amassed for yourself all the good things of the world, and now you can enjoy them in a long life and good fortune’” (204). Bultmann fails to clarify how this parallel influences one’s reading of Luke’s parable.

⁸⁹ Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (trans. Bertram Lee Woolf; rev. 2d ed.; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1935), 258, also focuses (almost exclusively) on the parable’s tradition history. He follows Bultmann in regarding 12:21 as a secondary addition. Dibelius notes that the narrative portion of the parable ends with “nothing else than the sudden end of all the rich schemes of the rich farmer.” The parable only becomes “moral” or parenetic if the appended application in 12:21 is added. The message in 12:21 is not inherent to the parable itself, he claims, since “nothing was said in the parable about lack towards God.”

⁹⁰ Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (rev. ed.; Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1972), 106; cf. 164.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 48. For Jeremias, the presence of hortatory material is not always an indication of secondary accretions. He finds hortatory elements in the parable of the “Unjust Steward” that he claims are “already implicit in the original form of the parable” (48). Cf. 112: “. . . the generalization [in this case] is not incompatible with” the meaning of the parable.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 106. He avers that the absence of 12:21 in Thomas’ version of the parable is further evidence of its secondary status in Luke’s gospel.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 106. See also 164ff. The new version of the parable is more similar to the man in Matt 6:19-21 who stores up treasure for himself on earth (112-13). In the majority of cases Jeremias finds hortatory material in parables to be a secondary addition. Such parenetic material adds a “moralizing sense” to the parable which “obscures the original situation and blunts the sense of conflict, the sharp edge of the

For Jeremias, the motif of death is less prominent than that of eschatological judgment. He classifies the parable under the category “Imminence of Catastrophe.” Parables in this group contain a call to repentance because of the imminent judgment.⁹⁵ Judgment and salvation are announced, though the former receives greater emphasis. God shatters the security of the “rich fool” in a night.⁹⁶ The stress in the parable is the approaching “eschatological catastrophe” which will be both as urgent and imminent as the death of the rich man in the parable. Such imminence requires decisive action. The hearers of the parable are to apply the conclusion to themselves and recognize how foolish they may be as well.

The only parallel text that Jeremias cites is Ps 14:1 (“A fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God’”). He claims that the term “fool” in the parable is used in the same sense as it is in the psalm, namely to refer to one who says there is no God.⁹⁷ Jeremias appears to be one of the first to cite Ps 14:1 as a parallel, and numerous interpreters follow him in reading the rich man’s folly through the lens of Ps 14:1. The most specific connection Wolfgang Weifel makes with wisdom texts is to claim that, in light of Ps 14:1, the term ἄφρων (in 12:20) indicates that the rich man has forgotten God.⁹⁸ Joseph Fitzmyer cites Ps 14:1 to support his claim that the “God-fool contrast” runs throughout the parable.⁹⁹ Robert Tannehill, referring to Ps 14:1, declares that the rich man “is a fool

eschatological warning, the sternness of the threat” (112). In this change he sees Jesus being turned into a “Teacher of Wisdom . . .,” a shift whose triumph he finds celebrated in Jülicher’s work.

⁹⁵ Other parables included in this category are “Children in the Marketplace” (Matt 11; Luke 7); “the Fig Tree” (Luke 13) and “Salt becoming Useless” (Matt 5; Luke 14).

⁹⁶ Jeremias, *Parables*, 164.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 165.

⁹⁸ Wiefel, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, 236.

⁹⁹ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, II:971.

because he is thinking of his own pleasures and behaving as if there is no God.”¹⁰⁰ That God calls the rich man a fool indicates to Stephen Wright that the man is “one who ‘has said in his heart: ‘there is no God.’”¹⁰¹ Bernard Brendan Scott reads the parable through the lens of Ps 14:1, concluding that the rich man “dies a fool, one whose very activity has denied the existence of God.”¹⁰² Frederick Danker sees in Luke’s description of the farmer a fitting application to “persons who forget God.”¹⁰³ In what likely reflects influence from Ps 14:1, I. Howard Marshall writes, “The fool is the man who feels no need of God.”¹⁰⁴ Klyne Snodgrass similarly avers: “Like the fool in Ps 14:1 the man left God out of the picture.”¹⁰⁵

Reading the parable in light of Ps 14:1 leads to understanding the rich man’s fault in (primarily) theological terms. Such theological readings of the rich man’s plans are justified, especially given the explicit theological interpretation Luke provides in the parable’s conclusion (12:21b). It is questionable, however, if the single use of ἄφρων (“fool”) (12:20) legitimates these particular theological readings. Numerous sapiential texts associate folly with motifs that are germane to Luke’s parable, namely the misuse of possessions and/or faulty perceptions of death. In chapter five, I will show that these sapiential texts offer a more fruitful and illuminating context for understanding Luke’s use of “fool” in 12:20a. I will demonstrate, in addition, the importance and advantage of reading Luke 12:20a in light of Luke’s only other use of ἄφρων (11:40).

¹⁰⁰ Robert C. Tannehill, *Luke* (Abingdon New Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 206.

¹⁰¹ Stephen I. Wright, “Parables on Poverty and Riches,” in *The Challenge of Jesus’ Parables* (ed. Richard N. Longenecker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 222.

¹⁰² Bernard Brandon Scott, *Re-Imagine the World: An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus* (Santa Rosa, Calif.: Polebridge Press, 2001), 95.

¹⁰³ Frederick W. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age: A Commentary on St. Luke’s Gospel* (rev and exp.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 247-48

¹⁰⁴ I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1970).

¹⁰⁵ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 399.

Arthur Cadoux joins previous readers in identifying the landowner's avarice as the parable's chief emphasis. He departs from all earlier readings by arguing that the man's selfishness consists not in enjoyment but in toil.¹⁰⁶ He sees in 12:20 ("God's epithet, demand and question") the parable's chief meaning, namely the "*reductio ad absurdum* of selfishness"¹⁰⁷ Cadoux does not refer to any wisdom texts, but he does cite as a parallel a Muslim tradition attributed to Jesus.¹⁰⁸

G. B. Caird joins previous interpreters in identifying the potential dangers of wealth as the parable's central theme.¹⁰⁹ Reading the parable in light of Luke 12:22-34 leads him to see the importance of anxiety and, to a lesser extent, death. Caird sees the man's monologue and plan to build larger barns as an indication of anxiety. The rich man learns the lesson Jesus conveys in the discourse, namely that "anxiety cannot postpone for one hour the approach of death."¹¹⁰ The rich man also discovers that his wealth "is not a permanent possession." Death discloses his "essential poverty," since the "only possessions worthy of man's striving are those death cannot take away."¹¹¹

Wolfgang Wiefel follows Jülicher, Bultmann, et al. in classifying the parable as a *Beispielergählung*.¹¹² Wiefel sees a contrast between the rich man's certainty and the

¹⁰⁶ Arthur T. Cadoux, *The Parables of Jesus: Their Art and Use* (London: James Clark, 1931), 205: "The result of his systematic selfishness is that all his life has been not enjoyment but toil, and that all the results of his toil will be enjoyed by those for whom he cares nothing."

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 205. Cadoux differs from many interpreters in not seeing a significant connection between the parable and 12:15. He takes 12:21 as an "editorial comment," which expresses a "favorite idea of Luke's and takes attention away from the question in which the parable culminates . . ."

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 206.: "Whoso craves wealth is like a man who drinks sea-water: the more he drinks, the more he increases his thirst, and he ceases not to drink until he perishes."

¹⁰⁹ For other interpretations that follows this trend, see, e.g., Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 140; Crossan, *In Parables*, 83; Fred B. Craddock, *Luke* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1990), 162. All three scholars focus primarily on the man's covetousness, without referring to wisdom texts. Craddock reads the parable through Ex 20:17 and prophetic texts (e.g., Micah 2:2).

¹¹⁰ G. B. Caird, *The Gospel of St. Luke* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1963), 163.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 163.

¹¹² Wiefel, *Evangelium*, 236.

concluding point of the parable. He notes that the parable “takes up Jewish ideas” in its description of the rich man, but does not specify what such ideas might be. He lists *I En.* 97:8 and Sir 11:18 as texts that bear upon Luke’s parable, but his only insight about these is that “Jesus thinks of a landowner, one who expects a rich harvest.”¹¹³

Fitzmyer follows earlier interpreters in classifying 12:16-21 as an “example,” and not as a parable.¹¹⁴ He gives brief attention to the parable’s immediate literary context, and reads 12:21 to mean that the “goal of life” is not piling up treasure for oneself. He takes 12:15 to mean that the rich man is seduced by greed. Situating the parable’s meaning in the broader context of Luke’s statements on wealth leads him to fault the man for failing to share his goods with others.¹¹⁵

Fitzmyer draws attention to the parable’s focus on death and possessions. The rich man is seduced by greed. His folly consists in accumulating an abundance of goods “for the sake of *la dolce vita*.” This act is egregious given that one’s life will be assessed at its conclusion.¹¹⁶ The parable illustrates the death of an individual person and not, *contra* Jeremias, an eschatological catastrophe or the coming Judgment.¹¹⁷ The man fails to realize that death may arrive at any time. For Fitzmyer, the “point” of the parable involves the “consideration of death” that Jesus brings “into human existence.” The man experiences judgment at his death in the form of God’s speech, and one must answer in this judgment for how one has lived one’s life.

¹¹³ Ibid, 237.

¹¹⁴ Fitzmyer, *Luke*, II:971.

¹¹⁵ “As part of Lucan teaching on the use of material possessions, it implies the use of wealth on behalf of others as the way to become ‘rich with God.’”

¹¹⁶ Fitzmyer, *Luke*, II:971.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 971.

1.5.2 Reading the Parable in its Literary Context

Luke Timothy Johnson observes a number of pertinent connections between the parable and its immediate literary context (Luke 12:13-34), a unit whose focus he identifies as fear and possessions.¹¹⁸ He sees in 12:21 a hint that an alternative proposal exists to that of the rich man with regard to the use of goods.¹¹⁹ Johnson finds this alternative in 12:33, and he reads these verses in light of each other. He sees alms as the way of “being rich towards God, of establishing a sure treasure in heaven.”¹²⁰

Attention to the immediate literary context enables Johnson to recognize the motif of death in the discourse on anxiety (12:22-31). He notes that Luke not only acknowledges the reality of death but also stresses that people have an “eternal destiny.” A part of the man’s fault is his failure to consider the possibility of his imminent death.¹²¹ Johnson observes a connection between the motifs of death and possessions in the parable. The man not only neglects the possibility of his own death, but he “thinks that once he has all his goods tidily stored away ... his ψυχή will be secured and he can live the good life.”¹²² He also sees a link in 12:22-33 between death, possessions, and fear/anxiety.¹²³ The unit’s primary emphasis is on the intersection of the latter two motifs.¹²⁴ Luke shows that he understands that acquisitiveness is rooted in fear, and that this removal of fear is necessary for one to share one’s goods generously.¹²⁵

¹¹⁸ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Sacra Pagina 3; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991), 201, understands Luke 12:13-34 as a *qal wehomer* argument in reverse.

¹¹⁹ Idem, *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1977), 154.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 155; idem, *Gospel of Luke*, 202.

¹²¹ Johnson, *Literary Function*, 153.

¹²² Ibid, 153.

¹²³ Idem, *Gospel of Luke*, 202.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 201.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 201.

Johnson also situates the parable within the context of the gospel's views of possessions. He finds similarities between the parable and the story of the strong man (11:21-22), noting that they share in common the "view of possessions as fragile, as arousing false security and requiring constant preoccupation."¹²⁶ The parable illustrates a motif Johnson finds elsewhere in Luke, namely that "[p]ossessions are what men use to preserve their life, to gain security against threat."¹²⁷ In light of this, the rich man is a fool because "he thought [his possessions] secured his life 'for many years to come.'"¹²⁸

Donahue reads the parable of the rich fool with that of the Rich Man and Lazarus, seeing in the latter an emphasis on riches blinding one to the suffering of others, and in the former, a warning against greed and superfluous possessions.¹²⁹ The parable illustrates how wealth can socially isolate someone from others and God.¹³⁰ Such isolation is contrary to the biblical view that "wealth has been given also to benefit the poor and needy, never for the sole good of its possessors."¹³¹

Donahue sees God's final question (12:20b) as an inclusio with the question posed to Jesus in 12:13. The rich man's greed has prevented him from providing for his heirs. As a result, the man dies leaving "what will be a bitter dispute over the inheritance (cf. 12:13)."¹³² Donahue takes 12:21 as the parable's "second application," namely that

¹²⁶ Idem, *Literary Function*, 153-54. In both stories, "the disposition of the possessions signif[ies] the condition of the possessor."

¹²⁷ Ibid, 153.

¹²⁸ Idem, *Gospel of Luke*, 201. If read in light of Qoh 2:1-11, the man may be deemed a fool because he sought meaning in his possessions.

¹²⁹ John R. Donahue, *The Gospel in Parable: Metaphor, Narrative, and Theology in the Synoptic Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 179.

¹³⁰ Donahue, *Gospel*, 179.

¹³¹ Donahue, *Gospel*, 179; cf. 174-76; 179-80. The proper response of the Christian community to the dangers posed by wealth is to use material possessions "in service of the poor" (180). He understands Luke's parables to "offer an imaginative world where reflection is translated into action." The parable of the Rich Fool is seen as a negative example of this Lukan tendency (210).

¹³² Donahue, 178.

the fate of the rich man awaits others who likewise “lay up treasure for themselves and are not rich toward God.”¹³³

Tannehill sees possessions as the primary concern in 12:13-34.¹³⁴ He draws connections between the parable and the discourse in 12:22-34. Like Johnson, he reads 12:33 in light of 12:21, taking the former as a rejection of the man’s attempt to lay up treasure for himself.¹³⁵ The parable is a warning to the disciples and the crowd. He notes the contrast between the rich man’s plan to build larger barns and the ravens who do not have any barn (12:24). Learning from the ravens can prevent someone from falling “back into the greed of the rich fool.”¹³⁶ Tannehill sees in the identical question (τί ποιήσω) of the rich fool and the steward in 16:1-8 (cf. 12:17; 16:3), a contrast between the two characters. The former is a ἄφρων (12:20), and the latter is φρονίμως (16:8).¹³⁷ Like Donahue, Tannehill finds parallels between 12:16-21 and the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man (16:19-31). Both stories are about a “callous” rich man who plans to enjoy himself (12:19; 16:19), and in each case the man is judged.¹³⁸

The source of the man’s problems are shown in the monologue’s progression. His initial plans (12:18) are “prudent,”¹³⁹ since he “is preparing for the future,” perhaps in order to share with others.¹⁴⁰ Yet in 12:19 the man “shows no concern for others.” He “anticipates his own enjoyment,” by using a “hedonistic” formula.¹⁴¹ The man forgets

¹³³ Donahue, 178.

¹³⁴ Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation. Volume 1: The Gospel according to Luke* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 246; idem, *Luke*, 205.

¹³⁵ Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 246-47.

¹³⁶ Tannehill, *Luke*, 207.

¹³⁷ Tannehill, *Luke*, 207. Tannehill’s claim that the steward is wise because he gives away “property in his control,” reads against the parable’s own plain sense.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 206.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 205.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 205-06.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 206.

about death and God, and is greedy. Luke 12:21 refers to the “proper use of possessions,” namely “not being greedy.”¹⁴² The man fails because he could have shared his abundant crops as a “generous benefactor.”¹⁴³

Tannehill cites several parallels to Luke 12:19 (Isa 22:13; 1 Cor 15:32; Sir 11:19), but does not cite Qoh 8:15. Had he placed the parable into dialogue with Qoh 8:15, and considered the man’s plans as an attempt to actualize this maxim, he may not have evaluated the man’s behavior as wholly negative. He cites the adage, “Let us eat and drink, *for tomorrow we die*,” and insinuates that the man is a fool because he does not realize that death follows those who enjoy themselves.¹⁴⁴

The reading strategies of these interpreters demonstrate that attention to the parable’s broader literary context engenders richer readings of the parable. A second way to enlarge the parable’s context (and range of fruitful meanings) is to situate it within its broader cultural matrix. My approach to the parable (detailed in chapter five) adopts both of these reading strategies, and shows that this dual contextualization allows for a more fully textured reading of the parable. We turn now to readers who have employed the second of these approaches.

1.5.3 Reading The Parable with Greco-Roman Texts

Several interpreters read Luke’s parable in concert with Greco-Roman texts. Danker, Malherbe, and Hock employ this reading strategy and each is representative of its potential benefits and weaknesses.

¹⁴² Ibid, 206.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 206. Tannehill refers to the contrast in Sir 31:5-11 between the “fool” who is “taken captive by gold” with the “rich man who is blessed,” and notes that the latter “is generous.”

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 206.

Danker's primary strategy is to cite Greco-Roman sources that seem to cohere with what he considers as the parable's primary message. He reads the parable in light of comments on wealth by Greco-Roman philosophers¹⁴⁵ because, as with previous interpreters, he takes wealth to be the parable's central concern.¹⁴⁶ Danker suggests that Greco-Roman readers would have recognized familiar elements in the parable.¹⁴⁷

Danker cites Greco-Roman parallels to the effect that one should not be judged until one's death.¹⁴⁸ He suggests that if the rich man had taken such maxims to heart "he would not have pronounced his own epitaph! With almost brutal sarcasm comes the question about the things that were to spell his joy: Whose will they be?"¹⁴⁹ Danker finds incongruity between these cited maxims and the rich man's plans to eat, drink and be merry.

For Danker, the parable critiques "private wealth." Luke's Greco-Roman readers would be familiar with "the awful syndrome known as satiety-insolence-infatuation."¹⁵⁰ The experience of the rich man in the parable "revealed that man receives his life temporarily on loan from God and that he cannot live only out of the resources that surround his bodily existence."¹⁵¹ Danker does not cite any Greco-Roman texts that speak

¹⁴⁵ Danker, *Jesus*, 247-48. His commentary on this parable in the revised edition is little different from his earlier commentary, published in 1972; hence its placement at this point in our investigation. He titles 12:13-34 "Worldly Cares."

¹⁴⁶ On the basis of such citations he asserts that Luke's audience would see in the farmer the "antithesis of a public-spirited citizen." He cites Herodes Atticus for whom the purpose of having wealth was to distribute it beneficently. He notes that for Aristotle, *Nikomachean Ethics* (4.1.38), illiberality takes the forms of stinginess and "inordinate acquisitiveness."

¹⁴⁷ Danker, *Jesus*, 248. The man's monologue would be familiar to many in the Greco-Roman public due to its similarity with expressions on gravestones. He cites an inscription in modern Timgade, Algeria from the ruins of Colonia Marciana: "Make love, bathe, play, and laugh. That's living!"

¹⁴⁸ E.g., Ovid's remark, "Prior to death and exequies/ no human being shall be called a blessed one" (*Metam.* 3.135-37). He also adduces sayings by Solon ("judge no one happy until death") (Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.32.5) and Juvenal ("Look at life's last lap") (*Sat.* 10.274-75).

¹⁴⁹ Danker, *Jesus*, 248.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 249.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 249.

to this specific issue of one's life being on loan from God. Nor does he use Luke's immediate literary context to propose an alternative to the flaw he critiques in the rich man.

Danker's approach helpfully points out similarities between Luke's parable and Greco-Roman sources, and demonstrates a level of cultural exchange between Luke-Acts and its Greco-Roman milieu. The weakness of his strategy is that his selection of Greco-Roman parallels is predetermined on the basis of what he deems to be the central concern of the parable. The parallels he cites confirms his view of the parable's primary point. Finally, his citation of parallel texts seems to suggest that the extent of Luke's engagement with Greco-Roman culture was to appropriate motifs without necessarily engaging in a dialogue with them. He cites Qoh 8:15 as a parallel text but gives no indication of how it might be useful in understanding Luke's parable.

Abraham Malherbe argues that Luke 12:13-34 intentionally mirrors ancient Greek and Latin reflections on the topos of greed (πλεονεξία).¹⁵² He sees the man's actions in 12:17-18 as a sign that his "greed is insatiable."¹⁵³ "This is the attitude of the typical self-centered (μου), acquisitive covetous man given to gathering (συνάγειν) superfluities."¹⁵⁴ Malherbe twice insists that Luke represents the "insatiably covetous rich man as a hedonist."¹⁵⁵ Reading the parable in conversation with Greco-Roman texts leads him to interpret greed as the primary concern of the parable. Malherbe's attention to the topos of greed is helpful, especially since Luke's own literary context invites such a reading.

¹⁵² Abraham J. Malherbe, "The Christianization of a *Topos* (Luke 12:13-34)," *NovT* 38 (1996): 123-35.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 133.

Malherbe does not consider the motif of death, and this is likely due to the relative infrequency with which Greco-Roman texts juxtapose death and possessions.

Building on Malherbe's article, Ronald Hock situates the parable within the "broader cultural horizon" of Greco-Roman literature and, in particular, the Greek novel.¹⁵⁶ He classifies the rich man as an "aristocrat" and, following Malherbe, characterizes him as a hedonist. He understands him in this way because of the man's plans in 12:20, and because he reads these plans in light of Greco-Roman texts that focus on greed.¹⁵⁷

The approach of Danker, Malherbe, and Hock demonstrates the extent to which the texts one chooses as dialogue partners influences one's reading of the parable. Choosing to read the parable in light of texts whose primary concern is the critique of greed results in pejorative judgments that the man is a hedonist. Reading the parable in light of Greco-Roman texts invariably leads, moreover, to a neglect of the motif of death. This is not surprising given the relative dearth of Greco-Roman material on the intersection of death and possessions. Nor is it surprising that these readers neglect or minimize the role of alms, given the lack of attention to this motif in Greco-Roman texts. Such motifs (e.g., death, alms) are brought to the fore, however, when one situates the parable in the context of Jewish sapiential texts. Such a strategy is justified by the parable's own allusions and echoes to these kinds of texts (e.g., Qoh 8:15; Sir 11:14-19).

¹⁵⁶ Hock, "Foolish Rich Man," 181-96.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 190.

1.5.4 Reading the Parable with (Jewish) Wisdom Texts

Bornkamm understands Luke's parable to be a type of wisdom expression, and he finds the absence of apocalyptic images significant. The parable is "in the style of the wisdom literature, which appeals to the natural understanding."¹⁵⁸ Given his view, it is curious that he does not cite any parallels to wisdom texts. The parable illustrates the failure to grasp the lesson in the parable of the steward, that one must prepare for the future.¹⁵⁹ Bornkamm identifies the man's neglect of his inevitable death as one of his faults. He seems to identify the man's folly as his anxiety, noting that the man's cares "devour body and soul instead of serving life."¹⁶⁰

Fitzmyer notes similarities between the parable and both *I En.* 97:8-10 and Ben Sira 11, but he neither discusses how Luke engages such texts nor how they bear on one's reading of the parable.¹⁶¹ Moreover, he fails to address a significant discrepancy between the parable and *I Enoch*. Whereas the latter focuses exclusively on wealth that is unjustly acquired (*I En.* 97:8a, 10a), Luke's parable gives no hint that the man procured his goods in this manner.

Stephen Wright finds prophetic and wisdom elements in the parable. For him, the "message" of Luke's parable offers nothing new. He sees it as a "transmutation into story form of the poetry of Psalm 49 . . . or the teaching of Sirach 11:18-21, with their emphases on the inevitability of death and the folly of trusting in wealth or envying the wealthy." He cites *I Enoch* 97:8-10 as another relevant parallel, and notes that the primary difference between these two texts is that in the parable God spoke to the rich

¹⁵⁸ Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (tran. Irene and Fraser McLuskey with James M. Robinson; New York: Harper and Row, 1960), 88.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁶¹ Fitzmyer, *Luke*, II:971-72.

man.¹⁶² Wright describes the man's monologue as "the typical outlook of a hedonist."¹⁶³ He also understands the man as a type of atheist, due to influence from Ps 14:1. The man is a fool because his goods will shortly pass to others, and the "illusion of ownership he has maintained will be shattered."¹⁶⁴

Wright's assertion that the parable merely echoes the wisdom tradition does not take into account the many ways in which Luke 12:16-20 reconfigures sapiential motifs.¹⁶⁵ Nor does Wright take into account the diversity within wisdom texts. He characterizes the "Wisdom tradition" as that which extolled "common-sense instruction as something God-given and portrayed obedience as not only right but also the best and safest course of action."¹⁶⁶ This applies to some wisdom texts but certainly not all.

Following Jülicher, et al, François Bovon describes the parable as "*une histoire exemplaire*."¹⁶⁷ Bovon draws attention to the theme of death in the parable. He claims the parable encourages readers to develop one's life with an "account of one's death," one which Bovon equates with defining one's identity in relation with God and neighbor (citing 10:25-37).¹⁶⁸ Bovon also asserts (relying on Ps 14:1?) that the rich man failed to live his life in the fear of God. The rich man's ultimate punishment is dying without any descendants or heirs.

Bovon acknowledges the importance of wisdom parallels to the parable, and he identifies specific aspects of the parable as having their "equivalent" in Hebrew and

¹⁶² Wright, "Parables on Poverty and Riches," 224.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 222.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 222.

¹⁶⁵ These I will detail in chapter five.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 223.

¹⁶⁷ Bovon, *L'Évangile Selon Saint Luc 9,51-14,35*, 245.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 257.

Jewish wisdom.¹⁶⁹ He cites several parallels of these (in a footnote) to show how Luke 12:15 and 16-21 fit into Israel's "wisdom tradition."¹⁷⁰ Like Jerome, he cites Nabal (2 Sam 25:2-39) as a parallel to the man's large reserves of goods.¹⁷¹ Bovon sees connections between Luke 12:19 and numerous texts including Qoh 8:15, 1 Cor 15:32, and Isa 22:13.¹⁷² These latter two ("Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die") are problematic given that Luke 12:20 seems to suggest that the rich man is *unaware* of his imminent death. The rich man plans to eat, drink and be merry not because of an awareness of a sudden demise but, as we shall see, *despite* such cognizance. Bovon notes the prevalence of this motif ("eat, drink, be merry") in Greco-Roman, Egyptian and Assyrian culture.¹⁷³ He claims that the evangelist places "this pagan wisdom . . . in the heart of a man whom he calls 'Fool.'"¹⁷⁴

To understand the parable, Bovon claims, it is necessary to "plunge into Hebrew wisdom," but he does not significantly pursue this line of inquiry.¹⁷⁵ His claim (that the rich man's folly lies in forgetting ethics, the fear of God, and ignoring the misery of others), is asserted rather than based upon a comparison with actual texts. So too is his claim that the man's punishment by God resulted from his failure to respond to the success of his crops with an "evangelical attitude." Although he states that numerous

¹⁶⁹ These include the man's own ψυχὴ as his interlocutor; the "foolish character" resulting from a life without God; the risky and passing nature of riches; the relation between sin and death; the inconsiderate enjoyment of goods of this world; and the "formation of capital from God's perspective (as opposed to here below)." This list would have been more useful had Bovon provided specific examples from wisdom texts.

¹⁷⁰ Bovon, *Saint Luc*, 252, ft 65. These include Ps 48 (49):7, 11, 17-20; Sir 11:18-19; *T. Jud.* 18-19; *I En.* 94:6-11; 97.8-10; Jas 5:1-6. He also refers to the beatitude and woe in Luke 6:20, 24 and "all the Lucan texts on riches."

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, 254, ft 82.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, 255, ft 85.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, 255, ft 87. Though the only sources he specifically mentions are funerary inscriptions, Euripides, Anthologie palatine, Herodotus, Plutarch, Lucian, et al.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 255.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 255.

parallels to the parable can be found in Seneca and *A Thousand and One Nights*, he provides no specifics regarding these texts.¹⁷⁶ He does cite Deuteronomy Rabba 9:1,¹⁷⁷ but does not explain how it relates to Luke's parable. He also cites Sir 11:18-19, but does not pursue how this text might influence one's reading of the parable.¹⁷⁸

George Nickelsburg notes the parallels between the parable and both Sir 11:18-19 and *1 Enoch* 92-105.¹⁷⁹ He situates the parable among these texts, noting that in contrast to Ben Sira, Luke's parable "agrees with 1 Enoch in describing the rich in a bad light, hoarding, relying on riches, and falling under God's judgment."¹⁸⁰ This link, paired with verbal similarities between the two texts, suggests that Luke's parable is "closer to 1 Enoch than to Ben Sira."¹⁸¹ Nickelsburg's effort to situate the parable in this way reflects a more nuanced understanding of the possible relationships and levels of engagement between Luke's parable and sapiential texts.¹⁸² Yet Nickelsburg does not note the difference between Luke 12 and *1 Enoch* regarding the issue of unjust goods. He also assumes that the rich man's intention of eating, drinking and being merry is the proximate cause, both of his imminent death and God's judgment.¹⁸³ The conversation

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, *Saint Luc*, 256.

¹⁷⁷ This is a story of a man who plans to preserve wine both for the circumcision of his newborn son and the son's future marriage. At that very moment, however, the angel of death announces to the father the imminent death of his infant son.

¹⁷⁸ Bovon, *Saint Luc*, 256-57.

¹⁷⁹ George W. E. Nickelsburg, "Riches, the Rich and God's Judgment in *1 Enoch* 92-105 and the Gospel according to Luke," *NTS* 25 (1978-1979): 324-344. For an earlier (and less detailed) analysis of the parable in light of *1 Enoch*, see Sverre Aalen, "St. Luke's Gospel and the Last Chapters of 1 Enoch," *NTS* 13 (1966-67): 1-13.

¹⁸⁰ Nickelsburg, "Riches," 335.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Following Nickelsburg and Aalen, Philip Frances Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), considers Luke in light of *1 Enoch*. He differs by seeking to understand what the differences between Luke and *1 Enoch* reveal about their respective audiences.

¹⁸³ Nickelsburg, "Riches," 334.

between *I Enoch* and Luke's parable is richer and more contested than Nickelsburg's analysis suggests.

Kenneth Bailey cites Psalm 49 as a parallel to Luke's parable, and he reads the parable in light of Sir 11:19-20.¹⁸⁴ He sees the parable as an expansion of Ben Sira's "very short story into a drama."¹⁸⁵ Ben Sira 11:19-20 is "directed to the wealthy who *acquire* their possessions by sharpness and grabbing." Jesus' parable, on the other hand, discusses wealth that is a divine gift.¹⁸⁶ Much of the parable is about the man's failure to "perceive the question in this fashion."¹⁸⁷ The parable carries "subtle overtones" lacking in Ben Sira such as the man's discovery that his soul was "on loan" and the possibility that his wealth was also on loan.¹⁸⁸ Whereas the rich person's life-style in Ben Sira is exposed (as "sharp and grabbing"), the parable exposes both the lifestyle of the rich man and the consequent isolation that his riches create.¹⁸⁹ The parable also differs from Ben Sira in that the rich man's problem in the parable is "what to do with unearned surpluses."¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁴ Kenneth Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes: More Lucan Parables, Their Culture and Style* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980). Idem, *Poet and Peasant* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) treats five Lukan parables (Unjust Steward, Friend at Midnight, Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, Father and Two Lost Sons) but not that of the Rich Fool. For Bailey's work on the parable's literary structure, see *More Lucan Parables*, 58. These parallels lead Bailey to conclude that Jesus "is dealing with a theme already well-known in the literature of the audience" (63). By "audience" Bailey seems to refer not to readers of Luke but to hearers of the historical Jesus.

¹⁸⁵ Bailey, *More Lucan Parables*, 63. Bailey thus sets himself apart from Jülicher and Seng for whom it was sufficient to cite the existence of literary parallels.

¹⁸⁶ That is, Ben Sira's man reflects on "What do I do with my earnings?" Jesus' man must however ask, "What do I do with what I have not earned?"

¹⁸⁷ Bailey, *More Lucan Parables*, 63.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, 63.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 63-64.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 64.

Jacques Dupont reads the parable in light of Israel's wisdom texts.¹⁹¹ His description of the parable (“a dramatic illustration of the sages’ teaching on the uselessness of riches in the face of death”) demonstrates the advantages and disadvantages of considering the parable in light of wisdom texts.¹⁹² Dupont identifies death and possessions as two important elements of the parable, yet he construes wisdom teaching on death and possessions as a monolithic voice. Some sapiential texts certainly exhibit a concern with the *inutilité* of riches in the face of death (e.g., Psalm 49), but this is one of many perspectives on death and possessions in what constitutes a richly textured sapiential conversation. Dupont draws attention to a legitimate (and helpful) aspect of wisdom teaching on death and possessions, but he misconstrues this single aspect as representative of the whole.

1.5.4.1 Bernard Brendan Scott

Scott sees the parable of the rich fool as an “illustration” of Sir 31:5-11, and notes the twin emphasis in the latter on the problems posed by riches, and the use of wealth for the purpose of charity and almsgiving.¹⁹³ Yet Scott chooses to place the parable into conversation with the Joseph narrative and the Sabbath instructions in Exodus. Whereas Joseph stored surpluses in *storehouses* so that others would have food,¹⁹⁴ the rich man stores up goods only for himself. Scott labels him an epicurean because of this selfish

¹⁹¹ Jacques Dupont, *Les beatitudes 3: Les évangélistes* (Paris: Gabalda, 1973), 113. He contends that the comparison with wisdom texts is “essential,” and he cites the following as the most important texts: Sir 11:18-19 and Ps 49:7-11, 17-20. For Luke 12:20b, he cites Ps 39:7; Sir 14:15; Qoh 2:21.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 113, 183.

¹⁹³ Scott, *Hear Then*, 133: “The hoarding of wealth is condemned; wealth must serve a public need.”

¹⁹⁴ Scott, *Re-Imagine*, 94. Emphasis his.

orientation.¹⁹⁵ The Joseph narrative and the Sabbath instructions enable Luke's audience to recognize that the rich man's harvest is a divine miracle that demands drastic action.¹⁹⁶ The rich man fails because he "mismanages the miracle" by hoarding his wealth.¹⁹⁷

It is unclear why Scott neglects Qoh 8:15 or Sir 11:14-19, both of which share several similarities with Luke's parable, in favor of HB texts where the connections are less explicit. Given the tenuousness of the connections, one wonders if the parable would evoke the Joseph narrative and Sabbath instructions in the minds of Jesus' (or Luke's) audience. In addition, Scott reworks the parable's ending in light of the Joseph narrative: the rich man's death will allow his harvest, like that of Joseph's, to "be available for the village."¹⁹⁸ The villagers will mourn for the rich man, build a statue to honor him for his foresight and planning, but will not know that God demanded the man's life. Scott supposes that God must intervene in the man's death lest the villagers starve.¹⁹⁹ Scott's reconstructed ending answers the question God poses to the rich man (12:20b), a question the parable is content to leave unanswered.

When Scott asserts that God's intervention in the parable "confirms the moral direction of the wisdom tradition" or that "on the theme of wealth Jesus is in agreement with the wisdom tradition," he flattens the tension regarding the use of possessions in wisdom texts.²⁰⁰ Similarly, his claim that the rich man's actions run "directly contrary to the injunctions of the wisdom tradition,"²⁰¹ assumes a degree of unanimity in the wisdom

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 94-95.

¹⁹⁶ Scott, *Hear Then*, 133-34.

¹⁹⁷ Scott, *Hear Then*, 136-37. He "sins against" two principles of the Mediterranean world: using wealth for community and perception of limited goods.

¹⁹⁸ Scott, *Re-Imagine*, 131. "God's purpose is fulfilled since the harvest "will be available for the good of all" (95).

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 95, 131.

²⁰⁰ Scott, *Hear Then*, 139, 140.

²⁰¹ Ibid, 139.

tradition that does not exist.²⁰² Scott's harmonizing and flattening of the wisdom tradition demonstrates the need to address the diversity and conflicting statements within wisdom texts. This will be our primary task in chapters two, three, and four.²⁰³

As this dissertation will do in chapter five, Scott compares Luke's version of the parable to that in Thomas. He claims that although both versions "belong to the wisdom trajectory dealing with riches," the two nonetheless belong to two different subsets of the wisdom tradition.²⁰⁴ He assigns Thomas's parable to the "major key" of the wisdom tradition and Luke's version to the "minor key."²⁰⁵ Though Luke's version draws on a common mytheme (greed), the parable focuses upon the need to dispose of wealth, an issue not given prominent attention in the wisdom tradition. The parallel in *Thomas* is "common wisdom" since it focuses upon the "common" theme of accumulating more money and appraising critically those who are greedy.²⁰⁶ His oversimplification of the treatment of possessions in wisdom traditions, and his neglect of the important intersection of death and possessions, weakens his analysis.

²⁰² Given the multiplicity of diverse sapiential perspectives, it is unhelpful (and not entirely accurate) to speak of a "wisdom tradition" in the singular. So Walter T. Wilson, *Love without Pretense: Romans 12:9-21 and Hellenistic-Jewish Wisdom Literature* (WUNT 2. Reihe 46; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991).

²⁰³ It is sufficient to note at this point that within the book of Proverbs there is a fair degree of ambiguity regarding wealth and possessions. Timothy J. Sandoval, *The Discourse of Wealth and Poverty in the Book of Proverbs* (Biblical Interpretation Series 77; Leiden: Brill, 2006), recognizes such ambiguity but seeks to argue for a more coherent treatment of wealth in Proverbs. James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (rev ed; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 147, finds Ben Sira to be even more attentive to the ambiguity associated with wealth than previous sages (e.g. Proverbs).

²⁰⁴ Scott, *Hear Then*, 130.

²⁰⁵ Whereas the former entails a "more common motif of an admonition against greed," the latter is a "less common subset on the use of wealth." Scott, *Hear*, 130-131, 140. The rich man's "problem is the disposal of his wealth" (132; cf. 133). Scott makes the same point in *Re-Imagine*, 16.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 66.

1.5.4.2 Georg Eichholz

Georg Eichholz reads the parable in conversation with Jewish texts and with the parable's immediate literary context.²⁰⁷ In this regard, he models an approach that most closely resembles the one I adopt in my treatment of the parable (see chapter five). The importance of his work for my project is evident not only in our similar approach but also in some of the observations and insights we share.

Eichholz affirms Jeremias's claim that the parable is an *eschatologisches Gleichnis*, one that warns, in view of the approaching judgment, to be cautious with accumulating worldly goods.²⁰⁸ In light of the parable, the query about the inheritance (12:13) reflects the "problematic tendency of always wanting to have more (*Mehr-haben-wollens*) than one has."²⁰⁹ The parable illustrates the reason why this tendency "is threatened in the end."²¹⁰ For Eichholz, the pairing of the parable and the inheritance question is one of several instances in which Luke focuses upon "the problem of wealth."²¹¹

Eichholz seeks to discover why the "clever" man "who acted so carefully" is called a fool.²¹² The accusation of fool gives the entire monologue "an unexpected omen."²¹³ Acknowledging the recurring motif in Qoheleth, "There is nothing better for

²⁰⁷ Situating the parable, and seeking to understand it, within the context of 12:13-31 reflects a departure from Jeremias.

²⁰⁸ Georg Eichholz, "Vom reichen Kornbauern (Luk. 12, 13-21)," *Gleichnisse der Evangelien: Form, Überlieferung, Auslegung* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1971): 179-191.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 180. He defines *πλεονεξία* as "*Mehr-haben-wollen (als man hat)*."

²¹⁰ Ibid, 180.

²¹¹ Ibid, 180-81. This is a problem Eichholz elucidates as "*der Macht des Reichtums in der Hand des Menschen zu*."

²¹² Ibid, 185. It is with the accusation of the man as a "fool" (and the reason for it) that we "find ourselves in front of the actual problem of the interpretation of our parable."

²¹³ Eichholz insists on not prematurely evaluating the rich man in a negative manner. He views the man's initial response to the large production of his land as responsible (183). He wants to be careful not to condemn the man prematurely. He affirms Schlatter's observation that the rich farmer's plan to build larger barns is "intentionally depicted" as "the overall customary method" and that there is nothing mentioned

people than to eat and drink and enjoy one's toil" (2:24; 3:13; 5:17; 8:15), and referring specifically to Qoh 9:7-9, he remarks that *Lebensfreude* is not refused (*verwehrt*) in the Bible.²¹⁴

Yet despite the apparent pertinence (and closeness of vocabulary) of these texts to Luke's parable, Eichholz cites two reasons why this motif in Qoheleth should not be consulted as a relevant text for elucidating the parable.²¹⁵ First, he claims that these statements in Qoheleth should be understood within their context, one in which the Preacher is "stopped over the chasm of despair."²¹⁶ The joy of which Qoheleth speaks only comes from God, is a "rare possibility," and akin to a miracle.²¹⁷ It is a joy that calls for "self-denial (*Selbtsbescheidung*)." This *Selbtsbescheidung* is understood as the appropriate context in which the praise of joy in Qoheleth belongs.²¹⁸ Eichholz seems to imply that the absence of such self-denial in the parable makes Qoheleth an inappropriate parallel.

Second, Eichholz finds Qoheleth's insistence on death as an inescapable reality to be incompatible with the rich man's speech in which death is overlooked (*übersehen*).²¹⁹

regarding meanness or profiteering (184). He stresses that, at the outset of the parable, every feature of "exaggerated gaudiness" is absent. Any incriminating feature which might make us (as readers) disassociate ourselves from the rich farmer is kept away from him. Rather, the rich farmer (at this point in the parable) can easily be viewed as careful and exemplary in his economy. The text does not explicitly depict him as an egoist who thinks only of himself. He recalls Jülicher's remark that the rich man's speech (rest, eat drink . . .) "as such is harmless" (185). Eichholz suggests that the German passion for work has been projected into the interpretation of this parable.

²¹⁴ Ibid, 185-86.

²¹⁵ Ibid, 186. He acknowledges that Qoheleth can help us recognize the characteristics of the parable's monologue.

²¹⁶ Ibid, 186. Here he quotes von Rad.

²¹⁷ Ibid, 186.

²¹⁸ Ibid, 186. Eichholz here refers approvingly to the claim in Kurt Galling, "Das Rätsel der Zeit," *ZThK* (1961), 13.

²¹⁹ Eichholz, "Vom reichen Kornbauern," 187. "Der Monolog in unserem Gleichnis verrät kein Wissen um den Tod." He cites von Rad approvingly: "Wealth is uncertain, being just is uncertain, above all the future that comes is uncertain; only death is certain" (186). See Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology. Vol. I* (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1962), I:453ff.

Due to this disparity, Qoheleth's statements on enjoyment should not be employed as heuristic parallels to the man's monologue. Eichholz does maintain, however, that the "crucial error" in the thinking of the rich farmer is his overlooking of, and refusal to face, death.²²⁰ The man should have been aware of the "transitoriness" (*Vergänglichkeit*) of life,²²¹ since this theme appears in texts such as Wis 2:4b-5a.²²² At any rate, the man's refusal to consider death means that he has "not considered God."²²³

Eichholz's understanding of the parable is also shaped by the discourse on anxiety (12:22-31) and the broader context of Luke's statements on wealth.²²⁴ He claims that the *Aussage* of Luke's parable is an answer to the question, "From what does a person live?"²²⁵ He sees the motif of "wealth (*Reichtums*), in the sense of the problem of wealth" both in the parable and in the teaching on anxiety (12:22-31).²²⁶ The description of the man as "rich" (12:16) is significant since Luke's use of this term is never trivial "but rather hints always at an endangering of the person."²²⁷ Wealth is dangerous because it "teaches a person that one's life is secure."²²⁸ Buying into this belief is the rich man's primary fault. Wealth functions in his monologue "like a reliable guarantee of his life 'for

²²⁰ Eichholz, "Vom reichen Kornbauern," 187.

²²¹ *Ibid*, 187.

²²² "Our life blows over like the trace of a cloud, and like a mist it itself is evaporated"

²²³ Eichholz, "Vom reichen Kornbauern," 188. "God speaks here the speech of death because death comes in the *Auftrag* of God, because in death God meets the person" (189).

²²⁴ He also attends to the pericope on inheritance that precedes the parable. He writes that both brothers (in 12:13-15) are "determined by the worry about their existence (von der Sorge um ihre Existenz bestimmt)" (180). The younger brother insists on his right "because the worry about his existence also drives him" ("die Sorge um seine Existenz umtreibt"). Eichholz, 181, also sees Luke 12:22-31 as a "key part for the seizing of the Lukan interpretation of the tradition." Luke 12:13-21 is an "Art Kopfstück" to 12:22-31.

²²⁵ Eichholz, "Vom reichen Kornbauern," 189.

²²⁶ *Ibid*, 189. *Italics his*. This emphasis anticipates that Johnson's understanding of the danger posed by riches.

²²⁷ He cites Luke 1:51; 6:24; 16:19-31; 19:1-10. For Eichholz, Luke's Gospel "knows about the risk of being rich in the sense of a *real* risk" (189). *Emphasis his*. For more on Luke's view of wealth, see Eichholz, "Vom reichen Kornbauern," 35.

²²⁸ *Ibid*, 189.

many years.”” Despite the rich man’s perception, his wealth “cannot achieve what it promises. It can not even guarantee his life for an hour.”²²⁹ Moreover, the man’s wealth “conceals the gift-character of his life, so that his wealth allows him to live beyond reality.”²³⁰ The man’s delusional attitude towards his wealth prevents him from recognizing what is most real in life.²³¹

Eichholz sees in the discourse on anxiety the reason for the man’s folly. In this discourse, “all self-worries of a person are confronted with God’s unique worries for people.”²³² By worrying, the rich man takes charge of himself, misses himself, and bears the costs for himself.²³³ The parable reveals the “problem of human existence, the problem of a person contrary to the Gospel.”

Eichholz and I both situate the parable in two contexts: its broader literary frame and sapiential texts.²³⁴ Reading Luke 12:16-21 in light of these dual contexts leads us to identify similar motifs as important features in the parable (e.g., death’s inevitability, the neglect of death, greed, anxiety, the role of God). We differ methodologically, however, in four ways with regard to which sapiential texts we bring into conversation with Luke’s parable. First, I include Qoh 8:15 as a relevant parallel and important dialogue partner. In doing so, I seek to show that both Luke’s parable and Qoh 8:15 participate in and

²²⁹ Ibid, 189.

²³⁰ Ibid, 189. The phrase “beyond reality” is a quote from Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1952), 143.

²³¹ Eichholz, “Vom reichen Kornbauern,” 189-90: “In his monologue the rich farmer reveals that he misjudges the true foundation and that he continues for himself a fragile guarantee.”

²³² Ibid, 190-91.

²³³ Ibid, 191.

²³⁴ Ibid, 190, notes two specific parallels between Luke’s parable and James 4:13-5:6. Each text is concerned with “unused” wealth. He mentions the degeneration of chests and clothes as well as the rust of metal. Here the wealth has been “accumulated for nothing and no one, while it could have served others.” He sees in James 4:13 “the monologue of the rich farmer . . . translated, so to speak, in the speech of the wholesaler.” As God rejects the rich man’s plans, too are the plans of the wholesalers objected to (Jas 4:14). The rich man and the “wholesalers” ignore the “elementary wisdom” found in both texts, that “[n]one has one’s life at one’s disposal because it is only at God’s disposal.

contribute to a contested sapiential conversation on death and possessions. Second, in addition to Jewish texts that Eichholz does not consider, I also incorporate Greco-Roman and Egyptian texts as part of the sapiential conversation with which Luke's parable is engaged. Third, I seek to describe how Luke engages such sapiential traditions. Finally, we differ in what we consider to be the pertinent literary context for the parable. I expand the parable's literary context beyond 12:22-31 to also include 12:32-33. Doing so draws attention to uses of possessions that function as constructive alternatives to those modeled by the rich fool. These methodological differences enable me to carry forward and deepen some of Eichholz's insights.

1.5.4.3 Egbert Seng

Egbert Seng seeks to situate Luke's parable within the context of Hebrew Bible wisdom texts.²³⁵ His article primarily consists of parallels between the parable and Hebrew Bible wisdom motifs. He sees in the parable, and especially in 12:19-20, "a distinctive wisdom coloring."²³⁶ Given these important links to wisdom texts, he contends that "the essential features of our parable are *only* to be looked at in the context of *typical* wisdom motifs."²³⁷ He identifies six such motifs in the parable: (1) the "dubiousness and transitoriness (*Vergänglichkeit*) of wealth"; (2) the "laughable inheritance"; (3) the nature of the person in the context of life and death; (4) the

²³⁵ Egbert Seng, "Der Reiche Tor: Eine Untersuchung von Lk. xii 16-21 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung form- und motivgeschichtlicher Aspekte," *NovT* 20 (1978): 136-155.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 141-42. As evidence he points to the use of the terms ψυχή, εὐφραίνεσθαι, and ἄφρων. In light of "OT wisdom characterized literature," ψυχή in 12:19a refers to the "restless and anxious self of the person." שָׂנֵן / ψυχή marks the person "as an individual person in one's entire emotionality and need" (cf. Ps 11:1; 35:3; Sir 23:18; 51:19). Seng understands ψυχή in 19b as the "joyful feeling of the person" (cf. Ps 35:9; 86:4; 94:19; Prov 23:24; Sir 31:28). In 12:20 ψυχή is the "life of the person, which remains in the right of disposal of God." "Yahweh raises on the basis of his creative power a legal right to the ψυχή and asks for it back as a loan" (142). He notes that εὐφραίνεσθαι occurs often in Ben Sira.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 142. Italics mine.

accusation of the man as a fool; (5) “unconcerned enjoyment of life;” and (6) “having treasure in God.”

Seng claims that wisdom texts are in agreement that wealth is futile, ephemeral, and ineffective.²³⁸ He cites a catalogue of texts that depict wealth negatively. He highlights the dubiousness of wealth and its function as a source of arrogance and sin. The rich person is characterized in such texts as a deceitful sinner who trusts in his unjustly acquired fortune; as one who is greedy, torments himself to gather fortune, is unable to sleep due to worrying about his possessions, and whose health is destroyed.²³⁹ To make these points, however, Seng neglects sapiential texts that speak positively about wealth (such as the ubiquitous recommendations in Qoheleth to enjoy possessions).²⁴⁰

Seng’s selection of wisdom texts also influences his understanding of the rich man’s death. He reads the man’s death in light of wisdom texts that establish a “close-fitting connection between the sin of a person and death.” He cites texts that endorse the “act-consequence” relationship in which retribution is expected for sinful behavior. Seng summarizes the message in these texts: “In this sudden end Wisdom sees the just retaliation for the sinful arrogance.”²⁴¹ Since everyone is repaid according to one’s work, sinners will not receive impunity. It is the conviction of wisdom that a lengthy enjoyment of happiness and joy of life goes only to the god-fearing.²⁴² This person, in Seng’s understanding of wisdom texts, will have no fault and will miss no good. Seng fails to

²³⁸ Ibid, 142: “Wealth, which the man has accumulated, shows itself, in view of the divine judgment, as a futile and transitory possession, which is not able to save from death.”

²³⁹ Seng cites additional negative aspects of wealth. In his haste after profit the rich person “wrongly believes to have secured his life through the fullness of his wealth.” He is unable to foresee that his fortune is not permanent. Accumulated wealth is like a breath and decays in ruins which the rich man or his son will be unable to enjoy. The rich man can suddenly come into poverty. He cannot exhaust death and his treasure is not useful on the day of wrath.

²⁴⁰ Qoh 2:24a; 3:12, 22a; 5:17; 8:15; 9:7-10; 11:8-9.

²⁴¹ Seng, “Der Reiche Tor,” 144-45.

²⁴² Ibid, 146.

take into account wisdom texts, such as Qoheleth or Job, that explicitly contradict the notion that people are fittingly punished for their sins.²⁴³ His selective reading of texts flattens the diversity among sapiential perspectives and his reading of the parable.

On the grounds that wisdom texts consistently describe fools negatively,²⁴⁴ Seng claims that the description of the rich man in the parable as a fool “justifies his death sentence.”²⁴⁵ The rich man is someone who “when the day’s work is done wants to provide rest for his soul and to ask for careless joys of life.” Such an attitude is “. . . the typical sign of the sinner, that he sees, despite the quick end, the highest aim of life in the joy of his goods.”²⁴⁶ Seng seems not to notice that such a perspective is enjoined in the very wisdom tradition that he claims to represent. He cites texts that can be read as an encouragement to enjoy one’s life (e.g. Isa 23:13;²⁴⁷ Qoh 2:24; 5:17),²⁴⁸ and even includes Qoh 8:15 in this list. Yet he does not discuss the apparent conflict between the admonition to enjoy oneself (in Qoh 8:15) and his insistence that the Wisdom tradition eschews such enjoyment.

Is the parable, asks Seng, a “paranetic example narrative” (so Jülicher) or an “eschatological parable of judgment” (so Jeremias)?²⁴⁹ Seng answers this question by

²⁴³ See, e.g., Qoh 8:14; 9:1-3.

²⁴⁴ Seng, “Der Reiche Tor,” 145, cites texts which describe the fool as one who denies a concrete work of God, wrongly and arrogantly believes he holds his happiness in his own hand, holds oneself as wise, and follows one’s own head. The fool surrenders to an illusion and places excitement in dreams and is led to deceptive speculation and self-deceptions. The fool’s hope and faith are depicted, therefore, as ephemeral and like scattering smoke. The fool’s efforts are unsuccessful, for the fool is killed by his own anger and enthusiasm. The great foolishness causes the fool to fall. God ruins the expectation of the sinner and malice brings death to the sinner who always disappears in a day of wrath. The way of foolishness leads irrevocably to death.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, 145.

²⁴⁶ Ibid, 146.

²⁴⁷ “It is necessary to live to eat and drink, ‘for tomorrow we die.’”

²⁴⁸ “That is the praise of the enjoyment of life, that there is nothing better than to eat, drink and be happy in all one’s efforts.”

²⁴⁹ Seng, “Der Reiche Tor,” 139. For Seng, Jülicher views the parable as a “religious-moral” tale, and Jeremias understands it as an example of “*reaslisierenden Eschatologie*” (138).

arguing that God's speech in 12:20 is to be understood as an "OT prophetic word of judgment to a single person."²⁵⁰ Such judgment announcements always occur to an individual and refer to a "concrete and previously committed offense."²⁵¹ Such prophetic speeches contain a charge, which names specific offenses.²⁵² The central emphasis in the prophetic word of judgment is the rationale for the punishment. The penalty (*Strafurteil*) in God's speech to the rich man is the man's "sudden death in this night."²⁵³ Since 12:20 is a prophetic judgment saying to an individual, the penalty punishes only the rich man. God's speech thus has nothing to do with the eschatological judgment (*contra* Jeremias).²⁵⁴ He reads God's speech in 12:20 as a death sentence (*Todesurteil*) and in this death sentence he sees "the point of the entire story."²⁵⁵

Even though Seng engages the wisdom tradition he still reads the parable as a rather simple and straightforward tale. The act of the rich fool is a "negative exemplary case (*Musterfall*),²⁵⁶ one which is *fully clear in itself and allows no transfer or interpretation (Ausdeutung)*."²⁵⁷ He adopts Jülicher's terminology, suggesting that the narrative is a *Beispielzählung*.²⁵⁸ Luke 12:16-20 is a "*paränetisches Exempel*, which

²⁵⁰ Ibid, 139.

²⁵¹ Ibid, 139. He quotes Claus Westermann, *Grundformen prophetischer Rede* (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1964), 94.

²⁵² Seng, "Der Reiche Tor," 139: "Verse 20 consists of this charge in the simple assessment: 'ἄφρων.' This invective reveals the attitude of the rich man and justifies the now effected verdict."

²⁵³ Ibid, 140. He cites the use of ψυχή in 12:20 and 12:19 as evidence for an "immediate connection between the sin (*Schuld*) and the punishment" of the rich man.

²⁵⁴ Ibid, 141, rejects the attempt of Jeremias to apply the intention of the story to a "warning cry in view of the approaching eschatological catastrophe and the imminent judgment." Such a thought is "nowhere revealed" in the parable and is not the primary *Rede* in the parable's context. The individual eschatological understanding, he asserts, was not assigned to Jesus' proclamation of judgment.

²⁵⁵ Ibid, 138.

²⁵⁶ He quotes Linnemann here.

²⁵⁷ Seng, "Der Reiche Tor," 141. Emphasis mine.

²⁵⁸ Ibid, 141, 151. One will "have to understand the story properly as a *Beispielzählung*" since the question about the inheritance in 12:20 is incompatible with an eschatological event (151-52). "This understanding is confirmed in addition through the 'everyman' motif, which identifies the rich man as a universal exemplary type" (152).

illustrates in a model the problem of the finiteness of a person and the proper posture to earthly riches.”²⁵⁹ The coherent harmony Seng finds in wisdom texts comes at the cost of excluding or subsuming certain sapiential perspectives. This approach not only mischaracterizes Jewish wisdom literature as a unified tradition but also results in a skewed analysis of Luke’s parable.

1.6 Conclusion: Advancing a Conversation and Filling a Gap in Scholarship

Many of the questions that shape this dissertation have been adumbrated in previous scholarship. The full pursuit of these questions has been hindered by preconceptions about the parable’s potential meaning and purpose, frequently resulting in a simple emphasis upon possessions and wealth, and a corresponding lack of attention to death and its existential significance. Reading the parable in concert with wisdom texts, by contrast, highlights the important role of each of these motifs in Luke’s parable. Readers of the parable who employ a limited repertoire of wisdom texts regularly misconstrue contested sapiential conversations as a univocal tradition. Richly textured and generative readings of the parable are stymied by neglecting the diversity within and among wisdom texts.

This dissertation seeks to advance previous scholarship and redress the shortcomings outlined above by broadening the scope of the sapiential conversation with which Luke’s parable is engaged. Reading the parable in this manner, and in light of its literary context, will demonstrate that it is more complex than a straightforward denunciation of wealth or avarice.

²⁵⁹ Ibid, 152.

As the first step in redressing this shortcoming, I will delineate a broader spectrum of Jewish, Egyptian, and Greco-Roman texts whose focus is the intersection of death and possessions. This range of texts will show the existence of a distinct motif within wisdom literature regarding the interplay of death and possessions, and the diversity among sapiential texts regarding this contested motif. Such texts evince diverse understandings of death, and offer, in light of these perceptions, competing answers regarding how possessions can be used meaningfully.

2. The Interplay of Death and Possessions in Qoheleth, Ben Sira, *I Enoch* and *Testament of Abraham*

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will explicate four Hellenistic Jewish texts in which the intersection of death and possessions figures prominently: Qoheleth, Ben Sira, the Epistle of *I Enoch*, and *Testament of Abraham*.¹ I will show that the interplay of death and possessions is a prominent motif in each of these texts, and that the perspectives in these texts comprise a spectrum of diverse views. This spectrum reflects, I suggest, the existence of a lively conversation regarding the appropriate and meaningful use of possessions given the many uncontrollable aspects of death. The four texts in this chapter evince disparate perceptions of death, and divergent recommendations regarding the use of possessions. In each text, there is an integral link between its specific view(s) of death and its

¹ Most scholars see some degree of Greek influence upon Qoheleth. So Elias Bickermann, *Four Strange Books of the Bible* (New York: Schocken, 1967), 141-67; Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974) I:115-26; R. Braun, *Kohelet und die frühhellenistische Populärphilosophie* (BZAW 130; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1973); Charles Whitley, *Koheleth, His Language and thought* (BZAW 148; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1979), 165-75; L. Schwienhorst-Schönberger, *Nicht im Menschen Gründet das Glück (Koh 2:24): Kohelet im Spannungsfeld jüdischer Weisheit und hellenistischer Philosophie* (Freiburg: Herder, 1994); Norbert Lohfink, *Qoheleth: A Continental Commentary* (trans. Sean McEvenue; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 6-7, 13-14; Ronald E. Clements, *Wisdom in Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992) 34-35; cf. 42; Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 173. For Stoic influence, see Dominic Rudman, *Determinism in the Book of Ecclesiastes* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 173-99. Michael V. Fox, *Ecclesiastes: The JPS Bible Commentary* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004), xii, cautions that general similarities between Qoheleth and Greek philosophy do not imply “direct knowledge” on Qoheleth’s part. For Mesopotamian influence, see Oswald Loretz, *Qohelet und der alte Orient* (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), 90-134.

Most scholars understand Ben Sira as a text in dialogue with Hellenism. See, e.g., Miriam Lichtheim, *Late Egyptian Wisdom Literature in the International Context* (OBO 28; ed. E. Horning and O. Keel; Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1979), 185; Johann Marböck, *Weisheit im Wandel: Untersuchungen zur Weisheitstheologie bei Ben Sira* (Bonner biblische Beiträge 37; Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1971); Hengel, *Judaism*, I:131-53; Th. Midendorp, *Die Stellung Jesu Ben Siras zwischen Judentum und Hellenismus* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 8-24; J. T. Sanders, *Ben Sira and Demotic Wisdom* (SBLMS 28; Chico: Scholars Press, 1983); Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 173-74, 214-15; John G. Gammie, “The Sage in Sirach,” in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (ed. John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990): 355-72; Clements, *Wisdom in Theology*, 35.

John J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 248-49, classifies *T. Ab.* as Hellenistic Jewish literature.

corresponding advice concerning possessions. I will argue, moreover, that the motif of “control” plays a central role in perceptions of death and in corresponding attitudes toward possessions and its use. Various facets of death represent a loss of control and the diverse recommendations regarding possessions and their use represent attempts to seize control.

These four texts have been selected for analysis because they provide some of the most extensive treatments of the intersection of death and possessions in Hellenistic Jewish literature. The Hellenistic Jewish character of these texts also makes them fitting comparative texts with Luke-Acts. The sapiential features of each text provide an additional point of commonality.²

My treatment of these four texts seeks to explicate them through inductive close reading, an approach intended to allow the motifs and concerns of the texts to emerge from the texts themselves.³ I therefore seek to avoid reading them through the lens of Luke’s parable, asking how they might relate to questions or concerns that are his.⁴ I do, however, bring to these texts an *a priori* interest in determining their understanding(s) of the relationship between death and possessions.

² On the complex discussion of the definition and characteristics of wisdom literature, see Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 3-15; Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology. Vol. I: The Theology of Israel’s Historical Traditions* (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1962), 418-59; Walter A. Brueggemann, “The Epistemological Crisis of Israel’s Two Histories (Jer 9:22-23),” in *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien* (ed. John G. Gammie et al.; New York: Union Theological Seminary, 1978), 100; James C. VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI / Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2001), 115.

³ Although this type of reading attends both to synchronic and diachronic features of the text, it privileges the former as a window into the text’s potential meaning(s). As Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 15, notes, the primary object of inquiry in this approach is the literary text, and not “supposed realities” outside the text. This literary focus is due to the comparative intertextual aim of this project, namely to situate Luke’s parable within the context of a specific spectrum of texts.

⁴ Explicating the texts in this manner will allow a construction of a fruitful dialogue between them and Luke’s parable precisely because it treats each text as a legitimate conversation partner.

2.2 The Interplay of Death and Possessions in Qoheleth

Qoheleth simultaneously stands within a wisdom tradition and resists certain elements of it.⁵ What seems clear is that he rejects the Deuteronomistic theory of divine retribution due to its incompatibility with (his own?) experience.⁶

Qoheleth displays an intense interest in the interplay of death and possessions.⁷ No other book in the Hebrew Bible gives as much attention to the intersection of these two motifs. Though scholars have not overlooked Qoheleth's interest in death,⁸ few make it central to their understanding of his work.⁹ An exception is Shannon Burkes who argues that death is "the driving theme and main concern of Qoheleth."¹⁰ Death, she claims, "dominates the stage and forms the core of the author's melancholy."¹¹ She finds

⁵ So Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 55; William P. Brown, *Character in Crisis: A Fresh Approach to the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1996) 123; Fox, *Ecclesiastes: The JPS Bible Commentary*, x, xiii, situates Qoheleth squarely within wisdom literature, but avers that Qoheleth "shows no awareness that his observations clash with the beliefs of *other* sages" (xxxii). Numerous explanations have been proposed for his rejection of certain tenets of traditional wisdom. These include the emergence of a "crisis" within wisdom (So Kurt Galling, *Die Krise der Aufklärung in Israel* [Mainzer Universitätsreden 19; Mainz: Verlag der Johannes Gutenberg-Buchhandlung, 1952].) Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 68, points out the speculative nature of those who aver Qoheleth is a reaction to "conventional" texts such as Proverbs. Debate exists regarding the nature and extent of this rejection. Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 55, cautions that it is a misreading "to claim that Qoheleth jettisons wisdom per se."

⁶ See Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 57.

⁷ The most extensive treatments are Qoh 2:1-26; 3:11-22; 5:10-6:2; 8:8-15; 9:1-10; 12:1-7.

⁸ Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 228; M. A. Anat, "The Lament on the Death of Humanity in the Scroll of Qoheleth," *Beth Mikra* 15 (1970): 375-80; James L. Crenshaw, "The Shadow of Death in Qoheleth," in *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien* (ed John G. Gammie et al.; New York: Union Theological Seminary, 1978), 205-16; Michael V. Fox, "Aging and Death in Qoheleth 12," *JSOT* 42 (1988): 55-77; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Wisdom and Law*, 72-73; Mathias Delcor, "Jewish Literature in Hebrew and Aramaic in the Greek era," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, Vol. I (ed. W. D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 361; Jean-Jacques Lavoie, *La pensée du Qohélet: Étude exégétique et intertextuelle* (Quebec: Fides, 1992); Clements, *Wisdom*, 90.

⁹ Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 53, does not list it as one of the book's "essential points" (vanity, joy, wisdom, fear of God, retribution, and God) that are "central to the author's thought," but he does claim that death "casts its shadow over all [Qoheleth's] thoughts."

¹⁰ Shannon Burkes, *Death in Qoheleth and Egyptian Biographies of the Late Period* (SBLDS 170; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999), 1.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1. Death, moreover, "represents the chief flaw that embraces and subsumes all other problems in the world" (2). Her view remains unchanged in her subsequent work, *God, Self, and Death*, 6, where she speaks of death in Qoheleth as "the defining and insurmountable ground of existence."

Qoheleth distinctive in this regard, claiming that the author has “cornered the market” on the issue of death in the Hebrew Bible.¹²

In contrast, little attention has been given to the theme of possessions in Qoheleth.¹³ Qoheleth’s motif of enjoyment, closely related to that of wealth, has received ample treatment.¹⁴ Virtually no attention, however, has been paid to the intersection of death and possessions.¹⁵

The respective monographs of Shannon Burkes and Eunny Lee demonstrate the tendency to focus either on death or enjoyment of possessions without recognizing the integral relationship between these two motifs. A comparison of the specific texts that each scholar highlights is revealing. In the chart below, the top line lists the texts Burkes cites as Qoheleth’s explicit references to death. The bottom line shows the texts Lee classifies as the seven “enjoyment” passages.¹⁶

2:14-16	3:2, 19-21	4:2-3	5:15-16	6:3-6	7:1-2, 4, 17, 26	8:8	9:2-12	11:8
2:24-26	3:12-13, 22		5:17-19		7:14	8:15	9:7-10	11:7-12:7

The overlap between these two lists is striking. Ten of the thirteen texts Burkes considers to be explicit references to death occur in close proximity to texts Lee classifies

¹² Ibid, 1. She reiterates the assessment of Michael V. Fox, *Qohelet and His Contradictions* (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1989), 294.

¹³ Though see C. W. Reines, “Kohleth on Wisdom and Wealth,” *JJS* 5 (1954): 80-84; James L. Kugel, “Qohelet and Money,” *CBQ* 51 (1989): 32-49.

¹⁴ Eunny P. Lee, *The Vitality of Enjoyment in Qohelet’s Theological Rhetoric* (BZAW; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005); R. N. Whybray, “Qoheleth, Preacher of Joy,” *JSOT* 23 (1982): 87-98; Norbert Lohfink, “Qoheleth 5:17-19 – Revelation by Joy,” *CBQ* 52 (1990):625-635; Ricky William Byargeon, “The Significance of the Enjoy Life Concept in Qoheleth’s Challenge of the Wisdom Tradition,” (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1991); Agustinus Gianto, “The Theme of Enjoyment in Qohelet,” *Biblica* 73 (1992): 528-532.

¹⁵ Though see Blenkinsopp, *Wisdom and Law*, 72-73.

¹⁶ Burkes, *Death*, 59, ft. 100. Lee, *Vitality*, 3, 9. On the latter page Lee cites 11:7-12:7 but on the former she cites 11:7-12:1. This same list of “enjoyment” passages appears in Brown, *Character*, 137, who lists 11:7-12:1a.

as “enjoyment” passages. More significantly, each of the seven “enjoyment” passages cited by Lee occurs in the immediate context of an explicit reference to death.¹⁷

Burkes twice acknowledges the connection between death and enjoyment.¹⁸ She also recognizes that “Qoheleth’s repeated advice amongst all these comments on death is to enjoy life to the fullest while one can.”¹⁹ Yet she does not analyze the relationship between Qoheleth’s particular understanding of death and his admonitions regarding enjoyment.

Lee is more attentive to the formative role of death in Qoheleth than Burkes is to his comments on enjoyment.²⁰ Whereas Burkes relegates the “enjoyment” passages to the periphery of Qoheleth’s thought, Lee seeks to attend to the death and the enjoyment passages, insisting they need not be mutually exclusive, and that both are authentic expressions of Qoheleth’s world view.²¹ Lee also observes Qoheleth’s pattern of placing admonitions to enjoy life within the context of reflections on death.²²

Despite her observations concerning the close proximity of these motifs, Lee offers minimal comment on the precise relationship between death and enjoyment. The closest she comes to doing so is her observation that when Qoheleth “reflects on the inevitability of death, he does so in order to motivate people to embrace life all the

¹⁷ Though not listed as an “explicit” reference to death, Burkes, *Death*, 53, considers Qoh 12:1-8 to be a “reflection” on death.

¹⁸ Burkes, *Death*, 59, identifies one of the three types of reflections on death to be “places where Qoheleth counsels enjoyment, but almost always in view of death.”

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 72. She stresses that “in the vast majority of cases, these counsels lead Qoheleth back to the brevity of life, death itself, or *hebel*” (72).

²⁰ See, e.g., Lee, *Vitality*, 56, 66.

²¹ *Ibid*, 9-10, 74,

²² *Ibid*, 99: “Throughout his reflections, Qohelet describes life under the sun against the backdrop of inevitable death – the days under the sun are *hebel*. But it also comes with its invigorating possibilities.” She notes, 81, that the “[e]njoyment Qohelet espouses ... takes place with the specter of death ever looming in the near horizon.” She observes, 62, that the material on enjoyment in 9:7-10 occurs after “a passage in which he broods over the inevitability of death.”

more.”²³ She thus understands Qoheleth’s statements on death as evidence for his argument that one should enjoy life.²⁴

Furthermore, although both Burkes and Lee discuss Qoheleth’s “enjoyment” passages, they give little thought to the role of wealth and possessions as the principal means by which people are to enjoy themselves. Disregarding the role of wealth is an oversight, since possessions consistently function in Qoheleth as instruments of enjoyment. Enjoyment is not an abstract principle in Qoheleth, but is the result of a specific practice whereby goods are used to a particular end. In their general neglect of the relationship between death and wealth, Burkes and Lee are representative of Qoheleth scholarship.²⁵ As I will show, Qoheleth consistently responds to a reflection on death with specific admonitions regarding possessions.

I will explicate six pericopae in which death and possessions are juxtaposed: Qoh 2:1-26; 3:11-22; 5:10-6:2; 8:8-15; 9:1-10; and 11:8-12:8.

2.2.1 Qoheleth 2:1-26

The intersection of death and possessions is a thread throughout Qoh 2:1-26. The section begins with a lengthy rehearsal of Qoheleth’s pursuit of enjoyment (εὐφροσύνη / שמחה) (2:1-11).²⁶ Though he proposes to test himself with enjoyment and to experience good (ἐν ἀγαθῶ / בטוב) (2:1),²⁷ he forewarns the reader that he will ultimately regard

²³ Ibid, 56. She cites Qoh 3:19-22; 5:14-19; 9:5-10; 11:7-12:8. She neglects to cite 2:1-26; 8:8-15.

²⁴ See also ibid, 56, 62.

²⁵ Crenshaw, “Shadow of Death,” 205-16, offers one comment on the relationship between “death” and enjoyment. Von Rad, *Wisdom*, does not address the relationship between the two motifs.

²⁶ For variations on how to translate שמחה, see Fox, *Ecclesiastes: The JPS Bible Commentary*, xx.

²⁷ He uses the same verb, δεῦρο, that is in his invitation to eat bread in gladness and drink wine with a good heart (Qoh 9:7). Lee, *Vitality*, 38, notes that טאם connotes “to taste” or “experience.”

this enterprise as bankrupt (ματαιότης / הבל) (2:1).²⁸ Enjoyment is judged to be insufficient as a source of meaning. He calls laughter madness and, concerning enjoyment, asks, “What does this thing do?” (2:2).²⁹ What follows in 2:3-11 can be understood, in part, as an attempt to investigate and answer this query.

At the heart of his pursuit of εὐφροσύνη / שמחה is an attempt to seize control over potential vehicles of enjoyment. In addition to drinking wine in long draughts he sought to “become master over folly (κρατῆσαι ἐπ’ ἀφροσύνη / לאחז בסכלות)” (2:3).³⁰ His itemized list describing his endeavor to “seize” pleasure reveals numerous acquisitive efforts (2:4-9). Objects that he “acquired” (ἐκτησάμην / קניתי) include slaves, maidens/courtesans, flocks, herds (2:7), silver, gold, male and female singers, and a male and female cupbearer (2:8). These are in addition to his work building and planting houses, vineyards, gardens, groves, fruit trees, and pools of water (2:4-6). The excessive nature of his acquisitiveness is reflected in the claims that his quantity of possessions surpassed that of anyone else in Jerusalem (2:7-9).

²⁸ An early attempt to decode the meaning of הבל appears in Gregory of Nyssa, *Homélie sur l’Ecclésiaste* (ed. P. Alexander; Sources Chrétiennes 46; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1996). Legitimate meanings include “an incomprehensible (ἀδιανόητον) word or an unprofitable activity (πράγμα ἀνόνητον) or a foundationless plan (βουλή ἀνυπόστατος) or lacking a diligent goal/accomplishment (σπουδὴ πέραις οὐκ ἔχουσα),” (282.28-31). Cf. J. Chopinaeu, *Hèbèl en hébreu biblique: Contribution à l’étude des rapports entre sémantique et exégèse de l’Ancien Testament* (Ph.D. diss; University of Strasbourg, 1971); Michael V. Fox, “The Meaning of HEBEL for Qohelet,” *JBL* 105 (1986): 409-27; Fox, *Ecclesiastes: The JPS Bible Commentary*, xix; Lee, *Vitality*, 1-2; 30-31; Burkes, *Death*, 45-48.

²⁹ For מהולל designating laughter mixed with despair, see Fox, *Ecclesiastes: The JPS Bible Commentary*, 12.

³⁰ κρατέω can mean “conquer, lay hold of, become master of, get possession of, seize, secure” (Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* [9th ed.; rev. by Henry Stuart Jones; Oxford: Clarendon, 1996]), 991. Similarly, חזא can mean “grasp, take hold, take possession” (F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996]), 28. For other uses of סכלות, see Qoh 2:12, 13; 7:25; 10:1, 13; cf. 1:17 (שכלות). The existence of εὐφροσύνη as a variant in some MSS for ἀφροσύνη may indicate that a scribe understood pleasure, rather than folly, to be the object of Qoheleth’s control. The lack of a corresponding variant for סכלות, and the principle of *lex difficilior*, suggests that ἀφροσύνη is more original.

Qoheleth's acquisitiveness is a tangible expression of his quest for pleasure, an expression embodying (and revealing) the controlling nature of his enterprise. His search for pleasure is a quest for control, one that is manifest in multiple attempts to acquire and possess items and people. His unwavering commitment to this pursuit of pleasure is exemplified in not withholding anything that his eyes desired. Nor does he hinder (ἀποκωλύω / מנע) his heart from any enjoyment (εὐφροσύνης / שמחה) (2:10a).

It is possible that in his explanation for his total abandon (2:10b)³¹ he identifies enjoyment as the sole benefit of his pursuit of pleasure, and laments that such enjoyment did not produce any additional meaningful benefit.³² Qoheleth declares “all” the deeds his hands made and his toil to be ματαιότης / דְּבַל “chasing after wind (πνεύματος / רוח).” The net result is that there is no benefit (περισσεΐα / יתרון) under the sun (2:11).³³ He thereby provides an (initial) answer to the first question posed in the book regarding what benefit there is for a person who toils under the sun (1:3): none.

Qoheleth's discussion of pleasure leads to a reflection on death's universality and its elimination of memory. He challenges a traditional proverb (2:14a)³⁴ by pointing out that the wise and foolish both succumb to death (συνάντημα ἐν συναντήσεται τοῖς

³¹ “For my heart made merry (εὐφράνθη / שמח) in all my toil (μόχθος / עמל) and this was my share (μερίς / חלק) from all my toil (μόχθου / עמל).”

³² So understands the NJPS: “... rather, I got enjoyment out of all my wealth. And that was all I got out of my wealth.”

³³ The repetition of πᾶς / כל in 2:11 highlights the comprehensive nature of what Qoheleth considers ματαιότης / דְּבַל.

³⁴ R. N. Whybray, “The Identification and Use of Quotations in Ecclesiastes,” in *Congress Volume, Vienna, 1980* (VTSup 32; ed. J. A. Emerton; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 435-37, finds eight “clear examples” of quotations from Proverbs in Qoheleth (Qoh 2:14a; 4:5, 6; 7:5, 6a (omitting “this is *hebel*”), 9:17, 10:2, 12. See also Robert Gordis, *Koheleth—the Man and his World. A Study of Ecclesiastes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1955), 100; idem, “Quotations in Wisdom Literature,” *JQR*, N.S. 30 (1939/40), 123-47 = *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom* (ed. J. L. Crenshaw; New York: KTAV, 1976): 220-44; idem, “Quotations in Biblical, Oriental and Rabbinic Literature,” *HUCA* 22 (1949): 157-219 = idem, *Poets, Prophets and Sages* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971): 104-59.

παῖσι αὐτοῖς / מקרה אחד יקרה את-כלם (2:14).³⁵ Qoheleth too will share the fate of the fool (2:15), and this realization causes him to question the point of being wise (2:15).³⁶ Such a question bespeaks a utilitarian expectation regarding the extrinsic benefits of wisdom.

Qoheleth perceives death to destroy memory since the memory of a dead person vanishes among the living. The fool retains no memory (μνήμη / זכרון) of a wise person, and in “the coming days all things are forgotten (ἐπελήσθη / נשכה)” (2:16a).³⁷ The importance of this motif is indicated by its appearance in the conclusion to Qoheleth’s preface (1:11).³⁸ Memory’s fragility threatens one’s ability to live on after death. One is not only incapable of controlling *how* one will be remembered after death; one cannot determine if one will be remembered at all.

The inability to determine the recipient of one’s inheritance is identified as a third uncontrollable aspect of not being alive. This lack of control, and the possibility that a fool might inherit his goods, lies at the root of Qoheleth’s hatred of toil (μόχθον / עמל) (2:18-19). He is grieved because he cannot guarantee the moral stature of the recipient of his inheritance. If the results of his hard labor are given to a fool, what purpose (and meaning) is there in toil (2:20-23)?³⁹

Qoheleth’s frustration with these uncontrollable aspects of death and inheritance leads him to conclude that there is nothing better⁴⁰ than eating, drinking, and

³⁵ For συνάντημα as death, see Qoh 3:19a. Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 54, equates מקרה with death.

³⁶ Cf. Qoh 7:16. It is uncertain, as Huwiler, 164, notes, if Qoheleth’s evaluation of this αἰσθησιότης refers to his being wise or to the same fate befalling the wise and the foolish (2:15).

³⁷ This niphalf form of שכח can mean “fall into oblivion.”

³⁸ “There is no μνήμη / זכרון of the ones who were first, and indeed for the ones who came last there will not be a μνήμη / זכרון of them with the ones who will come after them.”

³⁹ This echoes the question posed in 1:3 and answered in 2:11.

⁴⁰ For this formula see Graham Ogden, “Qoheleth’s Use of the ‘Nothing is Better’-Form,” *JBL* 98 (1979): 339-50.

experiencing (δείξει / הראה) good in one's toil (2:24a).⁴¹ In light of an uncontrollable activity (who will receive one's inheritance), Qoheleth recommends using possessions in a way that can be controlled. By enjoying one's goods, one becomes the recipient of one's inheritance.⁴²

Death relativizes the use of goods in two apparently disparate ways. On the one hand, death renders the relentless pursuit of (and attempt to control) pleasure meaningless. On the other hand, another uncontrollable aspect of death (inheritance) provides an impetus to derive enjoyment from the use of one's goods (food, drink, toil).⁴³

The function and role of control may partially explain Qoheleth's ambiguous evaluations of the merit of enjoyment. His initial pursuit of εὐφροσύνη / שמחה is described in terms of an effort to seize control (κρατέω / זקא) of it. Moreover, he seems to have predetermined the outcome of this quest as one that will be meaningful. Enjoyment, wisdom, and toil are the three arenas in which he sought to procure meaning, and he evaluates each attempt as bankrupt. What he considers meaninglessness may not be these items in themselves (enjoyment, wisdom, toil), but the effort to control these as projects with a predetermined result.⁴⁴ He perceives these three things, moreover, not as intrinsically valuable, but as the means to a certain extrinsic benefit.

The chapter concludes with an understanding of enjoyment that is antithetical to his previous effort to control pleasure. Qoheleth 2:24-26 identifies eating, drinking, and

⁴¹ The hiphil of הראה can mean "cause to experience" (BDB, 909). Οὐκ ἔστιν ἀγαθὸν ἐν ἀνθρώπων· ὃ φάγεται καὶ ὃ πίεται καὶ ὃ δείξει τῇ ψυχῇ αὐτοῦ, ἀγαθὸν ἐν μόχθῳ αὐτοῦ / אין טוב באדם שיאכל ושתה והראה את־נפשו טוב בעמלו.

⁴² Yet Qoheleth will shortly qualify the inherent limits (and benefits) of this attempt to exert control through the use of possessions.

⁴³ Blenkinsopp, *Wisdom and Law*, 72, sees death as the cause of Qoheleth's vain pursuit of pleasure.

⁴⁴ Elizabeth Huwiler notes that הבל in 2:1 may refer either to "pleasure itself or to the experiment with pleasure" (Roland E. Murphy and Elizabeth Huwiler, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* [New International Biblical Commentary; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999], 164).

enjoying one's toil as divine gifts. The perception of wealth and goods as divine gifts comports with Qoheleth's view of God as a giver. God is not, in his perception, a *deus absconditus*.⁴⁵ God gives enjoyment “for who will eat or who will have enjoyment apart from [God]” (2:24b-25)?⁴⁶ The identification of the ability both to enjoy life and find enjoyment in toil as God's gift reflects a significant departure from Qoheleth's previous efforts at manipulating life for his own benefit. Recognizing the ability to enjoy life as a divine gift renders meaningless any efforts to control and manipulate such gifts.

2.2.2 Qoheleth 3:11-22

The universal inclusivity of death functions for Qoheleth as a warrant to enjoy possessions. Death is the one unavoidable event everyone must face.⁴⁷ There is a time “to be born and a time to die (ἀποθανεῖν / מות)” (3:1-2a). Wise and fools not only share the same fate (cf. 2:14-17) but so do people and animals (3:19a).⁴⁸ People consequently have no advantage over animals (3:19b). What distresses Qoheleth is that “all things go (πορεύεται / הולך) to one place” (3:20a). Dust is both the origin and destination of all things (3:20b).⁴⁹ His perception that death is the common fate of all beings leads him to recommend enjoyment: “There is nothing better except that a person enjoy (εὐφρανθήσεται / ישמח) one's deeds, for it is one's share (μερίς / חלק)” (3:22a). One is to

⁴⁵ *Contra* Leo G. Purdue, “Cosmology and the Social Order in the Wisdom Tradition,” in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (ed. John G. Gammie and Leo G. Purdue; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 469.

⁴⁶ To the good person God gives σοφίαν καὶ γυνῶσις καὶ εὐφροσύνην yet to the sinner he gives a work of περισπασμὸν (“distraction”) for the purpose of “increasing and gathering in order to give to the good one before God's face” (2:26). See Qoh 5:17f. for a similar focus on God's gifts.

⁴⁷ So von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, II:458; Huwiler, *Proverbs*, 159.

⁴⁸ “Regarding (ὅτι / כי) the fate (συνάτημα / מקרה) of people and the συνάτημα / מקרה of beasts, there is one συνάτημα for them; just as the death of this one is, so also is the death of this one, and there is one πνεῦμα / רוּחַ for all” (3:19a).

⁴⁹ It is unclear if Qoheleth's question in 3:21 is genuine or rhetorical.

find enjoyment in one's deeds precisely because one cannot know (or control) what will occur in the future (3:22b).

Qoheleth responds to the uncontrollability of death by recommending that one enjoy what lies within the realm of one's control. In so doing he suggests that intrinsic value can be found in the activities characterized by enjoyment. The inscrutability of God's actions (3:11), for example, leads him to realize that there is nothing better than "to enjoy and do well in one's life" (τοῦ εὐφρανθῆναι καὶ τοῦ ποιεῖν ἀγαθὸν ἐν ζῶῃ αὐτοῦ / לשמח ולעשות טוב בחייו) (3:12).

The ability to experience enjoyment is only possible because such activity is a divine gift (δόμα θεοῦ / מתת אלהים) (3:13). Identifying these activities as divine gifts qualifies the extent to which they may be manipulated or controlled. Because of their status as gifts, one cannot depend upon their perennial availability. Hence the injunction to enjoy when one has the opportunity in the present moment. Qoheleth's perception of these activities as divine gifts shows that his apophatic tendencies are not absolute. God is, if nothing else, a giver.

2.2.3 Qoheleth 5:10-6:2

The intersection of death and possessions is a prominent motif in Qoh 5:10-6:2.⁵⁰ The section begins with reflections on the inability to control wealth and one's desire for it. People who love silver will not be satisfied (πλησθήσεται / בעב) with it (5:9).⁵¹ Such

⁵⁰ William P. Brown, *Ecclesiastes* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox Press, 2000), 61-62, sees 5:13-14 as an illustration of 5:10-12, and 5:18-20 as an "antithesis" of 5:13-17.

⁵¹ References are to the LXX whose verses (for Qoheleth 5) precede those in the MT by one.

insatiability is in direct proportion to one's level of material excess.⁵² In addition, there is no sleep for the one satisfied (ἐμπλησθέντι / שבע) with wealth (τοῦ πλουτήσαι / עשיר) (5:11). Efforts to guard wealth cannot ensure that it will not be destroyed (ἀπολείται / אבד), leaving an owner empty-handed when he bears a son (5:12-13).⁵³ The inability to guarantee that one's goods will be protected (and passed on to progeny) underscores the inherent fragility of possessions and the lack of control one has over them.

Qoheleth insists that one cannot take possessions beyond the grave. A person enters the world naked and will depart in the same fashion, taking “nothing in his toil (μὸς χθῶ / עמל) that might go in his hand” (5:14). This inability to take toil's benefit beyond the grave is a “wicked sickness”:

for just as one arrives, so likewise one will also depart, and what is one's benefit (περισσειά / יתרון), by the toil (μὸς χθῆ / יעמל) for wind? (5:15).

This permanent separation from possessions underscores wealth's ephemeral nature. Its use and any benefit (יתרון) it might provide are confined to one's present life. Because the fruit of one's labor cannot be guaranteed to last as an inheritance for one's children (cf. 5:13), and since one cannot bring the produce of toil beyond death, Qoheleth questions the purpose of engaging in distressing toil (5:16).⁵⁴

⁵² One does not, for instance, love one's product (γένημα / תבואה) in its abundance (πλήθει / הון) (5:9). The cryptic phrasing (καὶ τίς ἠγάπησεν ἐν πλήθει αὐτῶν γένημα;) reflects the Hebrew (ומי אהב / בהון לא תבואה). It is unclear if the αὐτῶν modifies γένημα or ἐν πλήθει. Lee, *Vitality*, 49, finds the primary concern of 5:7-6:9 to be the “problem of human greed and insatiability.” The only “usefulness (ἀνδρεία / כשרון)” of abundance is that one can see it with one's eyes (5:10b). ἀνδρεία conveys more of a sense of “manliness, courage, virtue, skill” (Liddell-Scott, 218).

⁵³ Perhaps this undependable aspect of wealth is what the author has in mind in the preceding verse (“wealth is guarded (πλουτῶν φυλασσόμενον / עשר שמור) to the κακίαν / רעת of its owner”) (5:12). κακίαν can be rendered as baseness, cowardice, wickedness, vice, disgrace, or dishonor.

⁵⁴ A similar issue might be the primary concern underlying his earlier question, “For whom am I toiling and depriving my ψυχὴν ἀγαθωσύνης / נפשי מטובה” (Qoh 4:8).

Given death's finality and the uncertain advantage of toil (μόχθος / עמל), Qoheleth concludes that what he has seen to be good (ἀγαθόν / טוב, καλόν / יפה) is to eat and drink and to experience goodness (ἀγαθωσύνην / טובה) in all one's toil (μοχθῶ / עמל), by which one toils (μοχθῆ / יעמל) under the sun, a number of days of life which God gives one, for this is one's share (μερίς / חלק) ... (5:17).

The uncontrollable vagaries associated with possessions and toil lead Qoheleth to recommend enjoying those elements (eating, drinking, finding goodness in one's toil) within the realm of one's control. Since the benefits of wealth cannot be enjoyed *post mortem*, one is to take advantage of them while one has the opportunity, before (and because) death eliminates such a possibility.

Notwithstanding his declaration that toil is for the wind, Qoheleth entertains the possibility that one can find goodness (ἀγαθωσύνη / טובה) in toil (cf. 5:10).⁵⁵ Eating, drinking, and finding goodness in toil is predicated on his understanding of possessions as divine gifts. God gifts some people with wealth and possessions (πλοῦτον καὶ ὑπάρχοντα / עשר ונכסים), the authority to eat from them and take one's share (ἐξουσίασεν αὐτὸν τοῦ φαγεῖν / השליטו לאכל ממנו), and the ability to rejoice in toil (εὐφρανθῆναι ἐν μόχθῳ / שמח בעמל) (5:18). The prominence of "gift" (δίδωμι / נתן) language in this pericope (cf. 5:17, 18a, 18b; 6:2) functions as a warrant for the enjoyment of wealth insofar as it portrays food and drink (and the ability to enjoy them) as God's gifts.⁵⁶ This, Qoheleth reiterates, "is the gift (δῶμα / מתת) of God" (5:18b). Given Qoheleth's perception of such goods as divine gifts, it is not surprising that his

⁵⁵ That ἀγαθωσύνη / טובה can be rendered as "kindness" raises the possibility that Qoheleth envisions being generous with the fruits of one's toil. If so, Qoheleth may be suggesting that meaning can be found in one's toil by sharing the fruit of one's toil with others. Such an interpretation would cohere with the emphasis on generosity that Lee, *Vitality*, 71; 133-35, sees in Qoheleth.

⁵⁶ "Gift" language pervades Qoheleth. In addition to the above references, see Qoh 1:13, 17; 2:21, 26; 3:10, 11; 5:5; 7:2; 8:9, 15, 16; 9:1, 9; 10:6; 11:2; 12:7, 11.

consequent worldview precludes asceticism as a legitimate option. The (only) proper response to a gift is to use and enjoy it.

The “gifted” nature of possessions comports with Qoheleth’s understanding of the uncontrollable quality of possessions. If God can grant the ability to enjoy goods, this ability (presumably) can also be removed. Qoheleth envisions (and has observed) this very scenario. He acknowledges enjoyment is not always feasible. The antitype to the person described in 5:18 is someone to whom God gives riches and possessions and glory (πλοῦτον καὶ ὑπάρχοντα καὶ δόξαν / עשר ונכסים וכבוד), and whose self (ψυχὴ / נפש) is not lacking (ὑστερῶν / חסר) anything that one desires (ἐπιθυμήσει / יתאוה) (6:1-2). Yet God does not authorize (ἐξουσιάζει / ישליט) this person “to eat from it” (φαγεῖν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ / לאכל ממנו) (6:2). A stranger (ξένος / נכרי) will eat it instead (6:2).⁵⁷ The opportunity to enjoy goods is tenuous and cannot be guaranteed to last. This inability to guarantee one’s perennial enjoyment of goods provides a further reason for enjoying them in the present moment.⁵⁸

2.2.4 Qoheleth 8:8-15

Qoheleth’s admonition to enjoy oneself (8:15) is rooted in his view of death as the ultimate loss of control.⁵⁹ One has no “authority (ἐξουσία / שלטון) on the day of death” (8:8). Nor can one control how the dead are remembered. Some wicked people (ἀσεβεῖς

⁵⁷ He describes this circumstance as another “futile and a wicked sickness” (ματαιότης καὶ ἄρρωστίᾳ πονηρά / הבל וחלי רע) (6:2; cf. 5:15).

⁵⁸ The immediate literary context suggests that death is the tacit catalyst of the transference of possessions to a stranger (6:2). References to death occur in his subsequent comments (6:3, 6, 12). Lee, *Vitality*, 50, sees allusions to death in this pericope, and notes a connection between נפש (6:2, 3, 7, 9) and death. She draws on Canaanite mythology in which death “is portrayed as a monster with a wide-opened maw (*nps*).” She connects the insatiability of “Greedy Death” (citing *KTU* 1.23.61-64; cf. 1.5.2.2-4) with the reference to the insatiable נפש of “Sheol’s deadliness” (citing Isa 5:14; Prov 27:20; 30:16).

⁵⁹ Brown, *Ecclesiastes*, 89, sees the recommendation of enjoyment as a response to the “moral confusion of a world that is unable to distinguish the ethical from the manifestly immoral.”

/ רשעים) receive praise after they die (8:10). Although the wicked may be lauded undeservedly, they too hold no power over death and cannot control its timing. They cannot lengthen their days for a shadow (ἐν σκιά / כצל) (8:13).⁶⁰

Qoheleth's perception of death as a common fate shared by the just and the wicked leads him to recommend enjoyment as the optimal use of possessions. He laments that death comes to everyone without any regard for how one has lived.⁶¹ Death comes equally to the just (δαίνοιοι / צדיקים) and the wicked (ἀσεβῶν / רשעים) despite their respective behavior (8:14).⁶² Qoheleth responds to this uncontrollable facet of death by recommending and praising enjoyment (εὐφροσύνη / שמחה)

because there is nothing better for a person under the sun except to eat and drink and enjoy (τοῦ φαγεῖν καὶ τοῦ πιεῖν καὶ τοῦ εὐφρανεθῆναι / לאכול ולשתות (ולשמח), and this will accompany one in one's toil (μόχθος / עמל) throughout his days of life, whatever God gives one under the sun (8:15).

This invitation to enjoyment can be understood, in part, as a rejection of the need to pursue a just life since the just and the wicked share the same fate.⁶³ Since the extent of what lies beyond one's control is so great, Qoheleth enjoins people to do that which lies within their realm of control (eating, drinking, enjoyment).

2.2.5 Qoheleth 9:1-10

As in 5:10-6:2 and 8:8-15, Qoheleth's counsel to enjoy one's goods in 9:7-10 results from his perception of death as the inevitable destiny of everyone (9:1-6). Death's

⁶⁰ Cf. Qoh 6:12 where the brevity of life is likened to a shadow.

⁶¹ He again anticipates his concern in 9:2-3 regarding the universally inclusive, and therefore futile (ματαιότης / הבל), nature of death.

⁶² Though he does not specify the precise content of φθάνει / מגיע (and what it is that happens to the just and the wicked), one may infer from the preceding context that Qoheleth is alluding to death. So Michael V. Fox, *A Time to Tear Down*, 292, who sees death as the primary focus in Qoh 8:11-14.

⁶³ Such a view may explain his previous admonition that one not be too righteous (δαίνοιοι / צדיק), nor act too wise (σοφίζου / תתחכם), lest one destroy yourself (Qoh 7:16).

non-discriminating power ensnares all with disregard for one's lifestyle (9:2a).⁶⁴

Enclosing this discussion between two references to συνάντημα / מקרה ("event/fate") underscores death's universality (9:2a, 3). It is the "one event" (συνάντημα ἓν / מקרה אחד) for the four pairs listed in 9:2, and its universal grasp is evil (πονηρὸν / רע) because it happens to everyone (συνάντημα ἓν τοῖς πᾶσι / כי מקרה אחד לכל) (9:3).

Since the experience of death is not determined by one's religious, ethical, moral, or cultic stature,⁶⁵ it is impossible to exert any influence over it. This disconnect between death and the conduct of one's life constitutes a rejection of the "act-consequence" (*Tat-Ergehen Zusammenhang*) relationship, a notion prevalent in Proverbs and other biblical texts.⁶⁶

Qoheleth's belief that death annihilates one's being results in counsel to enjoy possessions. Death destroys all knowledge (9:5),⁶⁷ and the memory of the dead is forgotten, leaving them with no reward (ἐπελήσθη / נשכה) (9:5).⁶⁸ Death obliterates one's love (ἀγάπη / אהבת), hate (μῖσος / שנאת), and zeal (ζῆλος / קנאת) (9:6), thus wiping out

⁶⁴ It matters not whether one is righteous (δίκαιος / צדיק) or wicked (ἀσεβής / רשע), good (ἀγαθός / טוב) or evil (κακός / רע), clean (καθαρός / טהור) or unclean (ἀκάθαρτος / טמא), sacrifices (θυσίαζων / זבח) or does not sacrifice (9:2a). The repetition of this insistence reflects its importance for Qoheleth (9:2b). As it is with the one who is good (ὁ ἀγαθός / טוב), so also is it with the one who sins (ὁ ἁμαρτάνων / חוטא); as it is with the one who takes an oath (ὁ ὀμνύων / הנשבע), so also is it with the one who fears the oath (ὁ τὸν ὄρκον φοβούμενος / שבועה ירא) (9:2b).

⁶⁵ Fox, *A Time to Tear Down*, 292: "Qoheleth alone in the Bible complains about the universality of death."

⁶⁶ See Klaus Koch, "Gibt es ein Vergeltungsdogma im Alten Testament?" in *Um das Prinzip der Vergeltung in Religion und Recht des Alten Testaments* (ed. K. Koch; Wege der Forschung 125; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972): 130-180. For a critique of Koch, see Roland E. Murphy, "Wisdom—Theses and Hypotheses," in *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien* (ed. John G. Gammie et al.; New York: Union Theological Seminary, 1978): 35-42, esp. 36. See Blenkinsopp, *Wisdom and Law*, 46-51, 75-76, for a helpful overview. Regardless of the accuracy (and heuristic value) of "act-consequence" as a *terminus technicus*, it is clear that Qoheleth is at odds with texts that champion this perspective (e.g., Prov 12:21; Ps 1:6; cf. Deut 4:1, 25-27, 40).

⁶⁷ Whereas the living know (γινώσκοντες / יודעים) that they will die (ἀπαθανοῦνται / ימתו), the dead do not know (γινώσκοντες / יודעים) anything (9:5). It is thus preferable to be a living dog rather than a dead lion. Though cf. 4:2-3; 7:1.

⁶⁸ It is unclear if Qoheleth refers to the living no longer remembering the dead (αὐτῶν as objective genitive) or to the dead no longer having a memory of their own (αὐτῶν as subjective genitive). The preceding verse which speaks of the dead having no knowledge might support the latter view.

the very features that characterize humanity (body, knowledge, memory, and emotions). There is, accordingly, no longer “a share (μερίς / קלח) for the dead for ever in everything that has happened under the sun” (9:6).⁶⁹

The non-discriminating universality of death and its annihilation of one’s being lead Qoheleth to urge enjoyment and celebration (9:7-10). Such enjoyment consists in eating bread with gladness (εὐφροσύνη / בשמחה) and drinking wine with a good heart. God’s approval (εὐδοκέω / רצה) of such deeds lends them legitimacy (9:7).⁷⁰

Wealth and possessions are integral to the enjoyment that Qoheleth recommends. Wealth is necessary to procure bread, wine, oil, and white garments. This enjoyment is relational in nature and not to be experienced in isolation.⁷¹ Such enjoyment is not to be taken for granted, especially since it occurs within a world that is otherwise meaningless (ματαιότητός / הבל) (9:9b). Experiences of enjoyment do not alter the fundamental view of life as meaningless (ματαιότητός / הבל). Nor, however, does the fact that life is vapid (ματαιότητός / הבל) preclude the possibility of finding enjoyment (and good) in it.

Qoheleth concludes his counsel to enjoy possessions by re-employing death’s depriving nature as a warrant for enjoyment. One should do everything within one’s power since there is no work, reasoning, knowledge, or wisdom in Hades (9:10). His direct address, “Sheol/Hades, where you are going there!” reminds the reader of their unavoidable destination (9:10). Qoheleth’s admonition to enjoy life is a direct consequence of his understanding of the inability to earn a reprieve from death and the

⁶⁹ See Qoh 2:10, 21; 3:22; 5:17; 9:9; 11:2 for other uses of μερίς / קלח.

⁷⁰ See Qoh 5:17 where he recommends eating and drinking in the face of death. The celebratory nature of this activity is indicated by the instruction to let their garments always be white and not let oil be lacking upon their head (9:8).

⁷¹ One is to experience life with one’s wife (9:9a).

elimination of one's being after death.⁷² Notwithstanding the two individuals who seem to avoid death,⁷³ the Hebrew Bible does not entertain the avoidance of death as a likely possibility. What distinguishes Qoheleth is his explicit insistence that avoiding death is impossible, and the function of this belief as a basis for his ethos of enjoying possessions.

In Qoheleth 5 and 9, the specter of inevitable death functions as the rhetorical warrant for Qoheleth's admonition to enjoy oneself.⁷⁴ Qoheleth responds to the uncontrollable facets of death by imploring people to find enjoyment in those things that lie within their control. This counsel to enjoy life (Qoh 3:12-13; 5:17; 8:15; 9:7-10) signals a development from Qoheleth's initial rejection of his pursuit of pleasure (Qoh 2:1-1-11; cf. 4:8a).⁷⁵

2.2.6 Qoheleth 11:7-12:8⁷⁶

It is fitting that in Qoheleth's original conclusion,⁷⁷ death functions one last time as a warrant for enjoyment.⁷⁸ The advice on enjoyment (11:7-10) precedes a cryptic description (12:1-8), interpreted by many to refer to old age⁷⁹ and/or death.⁸⁰ Old age is

⁷² Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 54-55, sees the command to enjoy life in 9:6, 9 as conditioned by 9:10: "One is to live life to the fullest in view of the total inertia that one will eventually experience in Sheol."

⁷³ See Gen 5:22 and 2 Ki 2:11.

⁷⁴ Many, e.g., Lee, *Vitality*, 64-65; Brown, *Ecclesiastes*, 95-95, have noted this similarity with the *Epic of Gilgamesh* in which an admonition to enjoy life is linked to a recognition of death.

⁷⁵ The eye of the person who lacks a son and brother οὐκ ἐμπίπλαται πλούτου / לא תשבֵע עשר (4:8a).

⁷⁶ Fox, *Qoheleth and His Contradictions*, 277, takes 11:7-12:8 as a single unit. He sees 12:1a as the "second section of the carpe diem begun in 11:7" (299).

⁷⁷ That Qoh 12:9-14 is a later addition is one of the few points on which most Qoheleth scholars agree. See, e.g., Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, 52, 59; Lohfink, *Qoheleth*, 142-43; Tremper Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 37-38.

⁷⁸ So Lohfink, *Qoheleth*, 3; Fox, *Qoheleth and His Contradictions*, 286.

⁷⁹ So Loretz, *Qohelet*, 189-93; Maurice Gilbert, "La description de la vieillesse en Qohelet XII 1-7 est-elle allégorique?" *VTSup* 32 (1981): 96-109. Fox, *Qoheleth and His Contradictions*, 286-87, rejects this view since it does not agree with earlier emphases in the book.

⁸⁰ So Christian D. Ginsburg, *Cohoeleth* (London: Longman, Green and Roberts, 1861; reprint, New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1970); C. Taylor, *The Dirge of Cohoeleth* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1874), iii-iv; von Rad, *Wisdom*, 45; Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 55; Lohfink, *Qoheleth*, 14-41; Fox,

characterized as a period of deterioration and lack.⁸¹ Of the years spent there one will say: “I have no desire (θέλημα / הפצ) in them” (12:1). The decline of the body is the principal feature of old age.⁸² This period is also marked by fear (ירא),⁸³ terrors (θάμβοι / חתחתים) and the failure of sexual desire (ἀκπαρισ / אביונה)⁸⁴ (12:5). This deterioration foreshadows and parallels one’s destruction in death. Every person will go to one’s “eternal home” (οἶκον αἰώνιον / בית עולמו) and “the mourners will go about the streets” (12:5). This transition to death concludes with “dust returning to earth and the breath (πνεῦμα / רוה) returning to God who gave it” (12:7). Qoheleth concludes this reflection, and the entire book, with his final reiteration that everything is ματαίωσις / הבל (12:8).⁸⁵

Qoheleth’s somber depiction of old age and death functions as a warrant to enjoy the pleasures afforded in one’s youth.⁸⁶ His funereal allusion⁸⁷ both calls to mind and vividly illustrates the end of one’s life.⁸⁸ By inviting the reader/hearer to imagine one’s own death and funeral,⁸⁹ Qoheleth provides a powerful rhetorical argument for his admonitions to enjoy life.⁹⁰ Situating oneself at one’s own funeral invites (or demands) the reader/hearer to consider, from the perspective of death, one’s life and how one has

Contradictions, 286-87. Burkes, *God, Self, and Death*, 77, sees in 12:1-8 both an individual death and the loss of faculties in old age. Some rabbinic interpreters (*Qoheleth Rabbah*; b. *Shabbat* 131b-132a) read each object in the poem as a reference to a (degenerating) body part. For 12:1-8 as a cosmic deterioration, see Burkes, *God, Self, Death*, 77; Fox, *A Time to Tear Down*, 339-43; Lee, *Vitality*, 29. Fox, *A Time to Tear Down*, 342, reads 12:1-8 as the death of an individual and the end of the universe. Cf. idem, *Contradictions*, 290. It is not without reason that Fox, *Contradictions*, 281, calls 12:1-8 “the most difficult passage in a difficult book.”

⁸¹ Burkes, *God, Self, and Death*, 77; Lavoie, *La pensée du Qohélet*, 99.

⁸² Von Rad, *Wisdom*, 45; cf. 228, understands the various components to refer to body parts.

⁸³ The Greek has ὄψοντα, perhaps construing the Hebrew ירא for ראה, or intentionally playing on the similarity between these words.

⁸⁴ Literally, the “caper-berry” or “caper plant,” an aphrodisiac.

⁸⁵ Thus forming an inclusio with 1:2.

⁸⁶ So Fox, *Contradictions*, 281.

⁸⁷ So Anat, “Lament,” 375-80; Fox, *Contradictions*, 288-90, 299 Lee, *Vitality*, 29; Lohfink, *Qoheleth*, 140-41.

⁸⁸ So Fox, *A Time to Tear Down*, 338.

⁸⁹ So Fox, *Contradictions*, 289.

⁹⁰ Lee, *Vitality*, 29, reads the poem as an eschatological treatment of the demise of all humanity.

lived. Qoheleth argues that the appropriate response to such reflection is the enjoyment of life and one's possessions. He precedes the poem on old age and death with four exhortations, each of which is related to enjoyment:

And sweet is the light, and it is good for the eyes to see the sun (11:7)
For even if a person lives many years,
one should enjoy (εὐφρανθήσεται / ישמח) them all;
and one should remember the days of darkness,
for they will be many;
everything that is coming is futile (ματαιότης / הבל) (11:8).

Enjoy (Εὐφραίνου / שמח), young man, in your youth,
and let your heart cheer (ἀγαθυναίτω / יטיב) you in the days of your youth,
and walk in the ways of your heart
and in the sight of your eyes⁹¹
and know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment (ἐν κρίσει / משפט) (11:9).

And remove (ἀφίστημι / הסר) anger (θυμός / כעס)⁹² from your heart
and lead away (παράγαγε / העבר) evil from your flesh (σαρκός / בשר),
for youth and folly⁹³ are fleeting⁹⁴ (ματαιότης / הבל) (11:10).

And remember your creator (κτίσαντος / בוראיד)
in the days of your youth,
before the days of wickedness come,
and the years draw near, in which you will say,
'I have no pleasure (θέλγημα / הפצ) in them' (12:1).

These admonitions convey an ambivalent perspective on death and enjoyment. On the one hand, enjoying pleasure is commended regardless of one's age (11:8). The period of

⁹¹ The discomfort with these instructions is evident in Codex Vaticanus which reads: "walk in the ways of your heart *blameless* (ἄμωμος) and *not* (μὴ) in the sight of your eyes."

⁹² θυμός can refer to any "strong passion" such as anger or wrath (Liddell-Scott, 810).

⁹³ As Fox, *Contradictions*, 280, notes, the LXX moralizes the "blackness" (שחרת), likely insinuating "prime of life," into "folly" (ἄνοσια).

⁹⁴ Fox, *Contradictions*, 279, notes that הבל here should be taken as "ephemerality."

youth is especially singled out as an optimal time to take advantage of such enjoyment (11:9).⁹⁵ One should enjoy life before the “days of darkness” arrive (11:8).⁹⁶

On the other hand, youth and folly are considered $\mu\alpha\tau\alpha\iota\acute{o}\tau\eta\varsigma$ / הבִּל (11:10), and judgment ultimately awaits those who do enjoy themselves (11:9c).⁹⁷ Even if one does not take 11:9 as an editorial gloss, it remains uncertain what is meant.⁹⁸ Will one be judged for enjoyment? Or will one be judged for failing to enjoy and walk in the ways of one’s heart?⁹⁹ What is clear is death’s function as a rationale for enjoyment (11:8; 12:1).

2.2.7 Conclusion

The following chart illustrates the connections in Qoheleth between his perception of death and his recommendations regarding possessions.

⁹⁵ Papyrus Insinger also speaks of old age (sixty years) as the time when enjoyment (of wine, food, and women) is severely limited (17.11-14).

⁹⁶ Fox, *Contradictions*, 279, takes this line as a reference to death.

⁹⁷ It is unclear how one should understand Qoheleth’s reference to “judgment” in 11:9. Many, e.g., Lohfink, *Qoheleth*, 135, 139, take this as a secondary gloss due to its apparent contradiction with other statements to the contrary. Yet discarding texts because they do not cohere with one’s sense of what constitutes the “genuine” Qoheleth is methodologically tenuous given the uncertainty regarding how one differentiates the genuine Qoheleth from the spurious. (Another remark on judgment occurs in 3:17 and scholars are also divided on its authenticity). Others take 11:9 as genuine. See Fox, *A Time to Tear Down*, 318. Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, 184, is uncertain. Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 57, thinks Qoheleth affirms a divine judgment but remains ignorant regarding the *manner* of this judgment (emphasis his; cf. 59). Lohfink, *Qoheleth*, 139, thinks it unlikely that the author has in mind a “next-worldly judgment of the dead.”

⁹⁸ Some, e.g., Longman, *Ecclesiastes*, 259; Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, take the *waw* in 12:9c as an adversative. Others, e.g. Gordis, *Koheleth*, 335-36, take it as consecutive.

⁹⁹ So Gordis, *Koheleth*, 336.

<u>View of Death</u>	<u>Issues Related to Death</u>	<u>View/Role of God</u>	<u>Possessions</u>
Uncertainty of Inheritance (2:18-21)	Meaninglessness of Toil (2:18-19, 22-23)	Goods as Divine Gifts (2:24-26)	Enjoyment (2:24a)
		God's Inscrutability (3:11) Goods as divine gifts (3:13)	Enjoyment (3:12)
In death all return to dust (3:19-20)	Uncertainty of Future (3:22b)		Enjoyment (3:22a)
Uncertainty of Inheritance (5:12-13)	"Can't Take goods with you" (5:14-15)	Days and goods are gift of God (5:17-18; 6:2)	Enjoyment (5:17)
Death is common fate of just and wicked (8:14)	One cannot control death (8:8, 13) or how one is remembered (8:10)	God is a giver (8:15)	Enjoyment (8:15)
Death is common fate of just and wicked (9:1-3)	Death destroys knowledge, memory, emotions (9:5-6, 10)	God has approved of enjoyment (9:7)	Enjoyment (9:7-10)
Death and dust is universal destiny (12:5, 7)	Inability to enjoy in old age (12:1-5) Days of darkness are coming (11:8)	God gave breath (12:7) God will bring into judgment (11:9)	Enjoyment (11:8-9)

1. Death and possessions are virtually inseparable in Qoheleth. Thinking about one invariably leads to considering the other. When he reflects on death, the first practical things that come to mind are issues related to possessions (e.g. the enjoyment of goods, toil, and inheritance).

2. Qoheleth's recommendations to enjoy possessions are a direct result of his perception of death as an inevitable event that destroys one's entire being, and that everyone, despite their behavior, experiences in the same manner. For Qoheleth, death is sovereign and omnipotent.

3. Qoheleth's advice to enjoy possessions can be read as an effort to find some way of exerting control given the loss of control represented by death. Many aspects of death and possessions lie outside one's control: the recipient of one's inheritance, how the dead will be treated, and the timing of one's death. One cannot lengthen one's life nor can one know what will happen after death. Death destroys every vestige of humanity. Nor can one influence one's death by the choices one makes in life. Death is inevitable and unavoidable. In light of these myriad uncontrollable facets, Qoheleth prescribes enjoyment as one (perhaps the only) way to exercise some modicum of control.

4. The fragility of this enjoyment is underscored, however, by the reminder that the ability to enjoy goods lies not in one's own hands but in the hands of God (Qoh 2:24-26; 3:13; 5:17-18; 6:2). Because enjoyment is a divine gift, one cannot guarantee its occurrence or its longevity (when it does occur). Efforts to manipulate it as a vehicle with a predetermined result are futile (Qoh 2:1-26). This fragility underscores the need to enjoy goods when they are received as a gift.

5. God is integral to Qoheleth's understanding of enjoyment. God's character functions as a warrant in six of the seven recommendations for enjoyment. Since God gives goods and the opportunity to enjoy them, enjoyment is one of the primary ways in which one can experience God. God is uncontrollable, but s/he provides the opportunity, even if fleeting, to experience meaning, through enjoyment, in a world that is otherwise meaningless.

6. Qoheleth's consistent focus on enjoyment reflects an interest in meaningful living. The integral link between death and the enjoyment of goods suggests that

Qoheleth might consider meaningful living to be dependent upon one's ability to face one's mortality.

2.3 The Interplay of Death and Possessions in Ben Sira

2.3.1 Death in Ben Sira

Death receives a significant amount of attention in Ben Sira.¹⁰⁰ With Qoheleth, Ben Sira insists that death is unavoidable. All must die (8:7; 38:22; 41:4). In addition, death's timing is uncertain (11:19; cf. 10:11). Ben Sira seeks to allay fear (9:13; 40:5) and anxiety (40:2-5) about death by stressing that death is in God's control (11:14; 41:4), and intimating, in sharp contrast to Qoheleth, that one can be remembered after death (41:3).¹⁰¹

Ben Sira provides scant information about what happens during and after death. One's spirit departs at death and it is impossible to return from death (38:21, 23). Hades is the postmortem destination for everyone and once there one cannot sing praise to God, give thanks, or ask questions (17:27; 41:4; cf. 21:10).¹⁰² Ben Sira gives virtually no description of a postmortem existence.¹⁰³ References to the afterlife are generally viewed

¹⁰⁰ So Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 78; Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 151. Cf. Friedrich Reiterer, "Deutung und Wertung des Todes durch Ben Sira," in *Die alttestamentliche Botschaft als Wegweisung: Festschrift für Heinz Reinelt* (ed. Josef Zmijewski; Stuttgart: Katholischer Bibelwerk, 1990), 204.

¹⁰¹ Wisdom of Solomon rejects the notion that God made death (1:13; cf. 2:24). Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 187-90, highlights the stark contrast between Ben Sira and Wisdom of Solomon on this point.

¹⁰² The Syriac version of Sir 41:4 ("Because this is the end of all sons of men before God") lacks the reference to the absence of "arguments about life" in Hades/Sheol. For the English translation see Michael M. Winter, "Theological Alterations in the Syriac Translation of Ben Sira," *CBQ* 70/2 (2008), 306.

¹⁰³ So Patrick W. Skehan and Alexander Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira: A New Translation with Notes, Introduction, and Commentary* (AB 39; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1987), 299. Ben Sira 19:19 is added in some ancient MSS: "The knowledge of the Lord's commandments is life-giving discipline; and those who do what is pleasing to him enjoy the fruit of the tree of immortality."

as glosses in the Greek version and not reflective of the Hebrew vorlage.¹⁰⁴ For Ben Sira, one who dies “inherits maggots and vermin¹⁰⁵ and worms” (10:11).¹⁰⁶

One can live on after death, however, in the memories of others. This hope is a significant difference from Qoheleth. Such remembrance is possible through the continuing life of one’s reputation or “name” (41:11-13; 44:10, 14), which can possibly “last forever.”¹⁰⁷ Not everyone, though, will be remembered equally after death.¹⁰⁸

Ben Sira believes that one’s death is influenced by one’s behavior in life. The one “who fears the Lord will have a happy end; on the day of death (ἡμέρα τελευτῆς) s/he will be blessed” (1:13; cf. 33:1). Ben Sira accordingly admonishes his audience to cling to the Lord so that their “last days may be prosperous” (2:3). Sinners, by contrast, will meet an ignoble end and not be held guiltless.¹⁰⁹ The law of retribution is evident here,¹¹⁰ and he rejects the view expressed in Qoheleth that one’s conduct has no bearing on one’s death.

¹⁰⁴ So Skehan and Di Lella, 86; Burkes, *God, Self, Death*, 111, ft. 58; Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 68, also thinks the original version lacks the eschatological thinking one finds in the longer version. Winter, “Syriac Translation,” 305-08, shows that some translations in the Syriac version evince an interest in emphasizing the reality of a postmortem salvation. He cites Sir 3:1; 14:6; 15:15; 41:4. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 115, notes that the notion of a postmortem divine punishment was foreign to Proverbs, Qoheleth, and Ben Sira.

¹⁰⁵ The Greek reads “wild animals.”

¹⁰⁶ The dead person is said to be “at rest” (22:11).

¹⁰⁷ Ben Sira 37:26; 38:34b; 41:11-13. This is true of the wise person (37:26), the one devoted to studying the law (38:34b, 9-11), and godly people whose deeds are righteous (44:10, 14). Their names live on through the declaration of their wisdom in the assembly, and the proclamation of their praise by the congregation (44:15). So also will their wealth and inheritance be passed on to descendants (44:11). Their offspring will continue forever (44:13).

¹⁰⁸ Although some “have left behind a name,” there are others of whom “there is no memory” (44:8-9a). These latter “have perished as though they had never existed; they have become as though they had never been born, they and their children after them” (44:9b). The Lord is able to erase the memory of certain nations from the earth (10:17).

¹⁰⁹ Ben Sira 9:11-13; 21:9-10; 40:8-10; cf. 40:12-15.

¹¹⁰ So Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I:142; Harrington, *Sirach*, 28, who also notes that Ben Sira does not “appeal to life after death as the solution to the problem of theodicy.”

2.3.2 Possessions in Ben Sira

Ben Sira's attitude toward possessions is ambiguous and not easily reducible to simplistic generalities.¹¹¹ His predominant attitude toward the poor is favorable.¹¹² Pervading his work are instructions to care for the poor, needy, and hungry (4:1-10; 29:8-9).¹¹³ Aid is to be given to the oppressed, orphans, and widows (4:9-10).¹¹⁴ One who cares for such people is "like a son of the Most High."¹¹⁵ One is to help the poor by "stretching out one's hand" and giving to them (4:31; 7:32).¹¹⁶ Giving alms (ἐλεήμοσυνη) is repeatedly presented as an ideal use of goods.¹¹⁷ In caring for the poor, one enacts God's own kindness towards them (11:12-13). In language echoing Exodus 22, Ben Sira intimates that God will hurt those who neglect the needy.¹¹⁸ One is not to take bread from the poor, not even for the purpose of cultic sacrifice (34:24-26).

¹¹¹ So Crenshaw, *Wisdom*, 147, 163 ft. 19; Benjamin G. Wright III, "The Discourse of Riches and Poverty in the Book of Ben Sira," in *SBL Seminar Papers 1998* (vol 2; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998): 559-578; Victor Morla Asensio, "Poverty and Wealth: Ben Sira's View of Possessions," in *Der Einzelne und seine Gemeinschaft bei Ben Sira* (BZAW 270; ed. Renate Egger-Wenzel and Ingrid Krammer; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1998), 150-78; R. A. Argal, *I Enoch and Sirach: A Comparative Literary and Conceptual Analysis of the Themes of Revelation, Creation and Judgment* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 252-54.

¹¹² Though one need not adopt the argument that he came from the poorer class, as in V. Tcherikover, "Jerusalem on the Eve of the Hellenistic Reform," in *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (ed. V. Tcherikover; Philadelphia: 1961), 148; Friederich V. Reiterer, "Review of Recent Research on the Book of Ben Sira (1980-1996)," in *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research: Proceedings of the First International Ben Sira Conference 28-31 July 1996 Soesterberg, Netherlands* (ed. Pancratius C. Beentjes; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1997), 36.

¹¹³ See Lutz Schrader, "Beruf, Arbeit und Mue als Sinnerfüllung bei Jesus Sirach," in *Der Einzelne und seine Gemeinschaft bei Ben Sira* (BZAW 270; ed. Renate Egger-Wenzel and Ingrid Krammer; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 117-49.

¹¹⁴ Visiting the sick is also enjoined (Sir 7:35).

¹¹⁵ Note the parallel to Luke 6:35-36.

¹¹⁶ Note the parallel to Deut 15:7-11. Generosity should also extend to one's neighbors (29:1-2).

¹¹⁷ Sir 3:14, 30; 7:10; 12:3; 16:14; 17:22, 29; 29:8, 12; 31:11; 25:2; 35:2; 40:17, 24. Asensio, "Poverty," 163, identifies alms as the "social aim of wealth in Ben Sira."

¹¹⁸ Sir 4:5-6; 35:16-19; cf. 21:5. For the parallel, see Exod 22:21-27.

Ben Sira's prevailing attitude towards the rich is negative and cautionary (8:1-2; 13:2). The poor are contrasted with the rich and are frequently preferred to the latter.¹¹⁹ The rich exploit, abandon, and deceive the poor (13:4-6). One should not lend to someone who is more powerful due to the likelihood of not being repaid (8:12-13).¹²⁰ Ben Sira critiques merchants (26:29; 37:11) and economic activities such as buying and selling.¹²¹ He associates the rich with luxury and gluttony, and critiques both vices.¹²² In the Syriac version of Ben Sira, there is an increase in the number of positive statements on poverty and the number of negative statements on wealth (e.g., 40:8-10, 28).¹²³

Related to this critique of the rich is a (generally) negative view of wealth. A person's wrath is linked to their level of wealth (28:10b). The love of money is derided (10:9),¹²⁴ and it is dangerous to depend on money.¹²⁵ Anxiety over wealth is self-destructive, as is the pursuit of wealth (31:1-2, 5-7). Ben Sira associates the wealthy with injustice, and claims their wealth will not last forever (40:13). Some sin in their pursuit of

¹¹⁹ Sir 13:2-7, 15-24; 21:4-5; 30:14-16; 31:3-4. Jeremy Corley, *Ben Sira's Teaching on Friendship* (Brown Judaic Studies 316; Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2002), reads Sir 13:15-23 as an indication of a dichotomy between wealthy Hellenizers and poor Jews.

¹²⁰ Hengel, *Judaism*, I:136-37, refers to Ben Sira's "impressive description of the power of the rich aristocracy." He observes in Ben Sira an "unbridgeable opposition between poor and rich."

¹²¹ Sir 11:10b; 26:29-27:3; 31:5-11; 37:11. Skehan and Di Lella, *Ben Sira*, 238, refer to such texts as "warnings ... on the possible evils of the business world and the pursuit of wealth."

¹²² Sir 18:30-33; 23:6; 31:12-17, 20-21; 37:27-31.

¹²³ So Milward Douglas Nelson, *The Syriac Version of the Wisdom of Ben Sira Compared to the Greek and Hebrew Materials* (SBLDS 107; Atlanta: Scholars, 1988), 123-24. The Syriac version drops 40:9-10 and alters 40:8 to read: "with all the sons of flesh their anxiety is with them; riches disturb their sleep." The instruction not to live as a beggar is changed in the Syriac to an instruction not to *refuse* a beggar (40:28). Nelson claims, on this basis, that the Syriac translator "was suspicious of wealth and not averse to poverty. Perhaps, in dropping 40:10, he was afraid to identify the 'poor' with the 'wicked,' since, in his view, poverty was an accepted, if not recommended, state of being" (124). For the Syriac of Ben Sira, see Paul de Lagarde, *Libri Veteris Testamenti Apocryphi Syriace* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1861); Nelson, *Syriac Version*; Nuria Calduch-Benages, Joan Ferrer, and Jan Liesen, *La sabiduría del escriba: Edición diplomática de la versión siríaca del libro de Ben Sira según el Códice ambrosiano, con traducción española e inglesa* (Biblioteca Midrásica 26; Estella, Navarra: Editorial Verbo Divino, 2003); W.Th. van Peursen, *Language and Interpretation in the Syriac Text of Ben Sira: A Comparative Linguistic and Literary Study* (Monographs of the Peshitta Institute: Studies in the Syriac Versions of the Bible and their Cultural Contexts 16; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2007).

¹²⁴ Some MSS add here, or after verse 9a, "nothing is more wicked than one who loves money, for such a person puts his own soul up for sale"

¹²⁵ Sir 11:10-13, 14-19, 20-21, 22-24, 25-28.

wealth (27:1). He considers sovereign nations to be built on “injustice and insolence and wealth” (10:8). He criticizes those who take money from others (21:8). Asensio sees in these kinds of statements an important “advance with regard to the ideas on wealth in the BHS.”¹²⁶ Possessions cease to be a sign of divine approbation.¹²⁷

Ben Sira also speaks about wealth and those who have it in neutral terms, without any of the aforementioned criticism (40:18, 25-26). Such statements have led some to claim that he “views wealth positively.”¹²⁸ Ben Sira notes that one should not be ashamed of certain business practices such as keeping accounts with a partner, keeping accurate scales and weights, the acquisition (κτῆσις) of much or little, or of profit from dealing with merchants (42:2-5). He assumes people will engage in business matters such as making deposits, and does not abjure this practice (42:7). He favors moderate eating (31:20, 22, 25-30) and speaks favorably of being cheerful and merry when one eats (30:25). He even speaks of the potential goodness of riches, if they are “free from sin” (13:24).¹²⁹ Most exceptional is the recognition that a rich person can be blameless, and Ben Sira intimates that this status can be achieved through the giving of charity (31:8, 11).¹³⁰ Nor are all of his statements about poverty favorable. One should not beg, for instance, since death is preferable to begging (40:28-30).

Ben Sira establishes a causal relationship between one’s use of possessions and how one is treated by God. Giving alms can secure one’s future with God. Ben Sira likens almsgiving (ἐλεημοσύνη) to a “signet ring with the Lord” who will “keep a

¹²⁶ Asensio, “Poverty,” 159.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 159: “There are instances in which wealth has its origin in greed, injustice, and crime.”

¹²⁸ So Reiterer, “Review of Recent Research,” 45.

¹²⁹ Note, however, that whereas riches have the potential to be “good,” poverty is “evil only in the opinion of the ungodly” (Sir 13:24).

¹³⁰ A caveat is provided that one must not pursue gold (31:8).

person's kindness (χάρις) like the apple of his eye" (17:22). God will "repay" (ἀναποδώσει) people who give alms, and "bring their recompense on their heads" (17:23). His equation of alms with sacrificing a thank offering suggests that alms have an effectual power to secure divine power (35:2). This power of alms is also evident in his assertion that almsgiving (ἐλεημοσύνη / צדקה) "atones for sin" (ἐξιλάσεται ἁμαρτίας / תכפר חטאת) (3:30).¹³¹ Not surprisingly, Ben Sira exhorts readers not to neglect almsgiving (7:10).¹³² Failure to give alms brings an appropriate (negative) response: "No good comes to the one who persists in evil or to one who does not give alms" (12:3).¹³³ By concluding a series of instructions on giving to others (7:32-35) with the reminder to "remember the end of your life" (7:36), Ben Sira suggests that contemplating death will lead to giving to the poor (7:32).¹³⁴ He also implies that generosity may benefit one on the day of death. The person who gives to the poor will be blessed (7:32).

Ben Sira is equally insistent that wealth cannot protect one from divine judgment (5:1-8). His warnings against presumption (5:1-8), self-sufficiency, and relying on wealth (χρήμασις / חיל) (5:1) conclude with an admonition not to "depend on dishonest wealth (χρήμασις ἀδίκους / נכסי שקר)," since it will not provide "benefit" on the "day of calamity" (5:8). He exhorts people not to pursue the desires of their heart vis-à-vis riches (5:2), and cautions against the illusory sense of power provided by wealth (5:3). This

¹³¹ The following verse ("Those who repay favors give thought to the future; when they fall they will find support," 3:31) raises the possibility that Ben Sira envisions alms as securing future divine favor.

¹³² Almsgiving is more helpful than "kindred and helpers" (40:24).

¹³³ Alms are to be given to certain people (the "devout" and "humble"), but not to others (the "sinner," "ungodly") (12:4-5a). One is not to give bread to the latter since "by means of it they might subdue you; you will receive as much evil for all the good you have done to them" (12:5b). One should give alms "to the one who is good, but do not help the sinner" (12:7).

¹³⁴ On the importance of remembering the end of one's life, see Sir 28:6.

admonition comports with other reminders that storing up riches does not “guarantee security.”¹³⁵

In sum, wealth is not intrinsically evil for Ben Sira, but it does present a series of potential dangers for its owner and those who pursue it.¹³⁶ On the other hand, the emphasis on alms points to the potential benefit of wealth, if used properly.

2.3.3 Ben Sira 11:14-28¹³⁷

Ben Sira 11:14-28¹³⁸ contains a reflection on the meaningful uses of possessions given the inevitability and uncertain timing of death. The discussion is framed by an introduction acknowledging that “good things and evil things, life and death (θάνατος / מות),¹³⁹ poverty and riches (πτωχεία καὶ πλοῦτος / ריש ועושר) are from (παρὰ / מן) the Lord (Sir 11:14).¹⁴⁰

Ben Sira 11:17-18 describes a rather conventional view of wealth in which God blesses with riches those who live rightly. The Lord’s gift (δόςις) remains with the godly/righteous (εὐσεβέσις / צדיק) and his favor (εὐδοκία / ורצנו) will last

¹³⁵ Sir11:10-11, 18-19, 20-21a, 23-24. So Harrington, *Jesus Ben Sira*, 39.

¹³⁶ So Asensio, “Poverty,” 163; cf. 158-63.

¹³⁷ Skehan and Di Lella, *Ben Sira*, 238, see six “minipoems” in 11:7-28. I do not include the first of these (11:7-9) since it is the only one of the six that does not address death or wealth. Di Lella takes “My son,” in 11:10 as “an indication of a new subject matter.”

¹³⁸ The verse numbers I cite refer to the critical Greek text in J. Ziegler, ed., *Sapientia Iesu Filii Sirach* (Septuaginta 12/2: Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965). My translation is based upon this Greek text. For the translation in Ben Sira from Hebrew to Greek, see Benjamin G. Wright, “New Perspectives on Biblical Vocabulary and Translation Technique: Sirach in Relation to its Presumed Hebrew ‘Vorlage’” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1988).

¹³⁹ For the Hebrew text of Ben Sira, I use the manuscripts in Pancratius C. Beentjes, *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew: A Text Edition of All Extant Manuscripts and a Synopsis of All Parallel Hebrew Ben Sira Texts* (VTSupp 68; Leiden: Brill, 1997). For a synopsis of these extant versions, see Friedrich V. Reiterer, *Zählsynopse zum buch Ben Sira* (Fontes et Subsidia ad Bibliam pertinentes 1; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003). For other issues related to the Hebrew text, see Pancratius Beentjes, “Happy the One who Meditates on Wisdom” (Sir. 14,20): *Collected Essays on the Book of Ben Sira* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 43; Leuven: Peeters, 2006).

¹⁴⁰ The third pairing (πτωχεία καὶ πλοῦτος / ריש ועושר) disrupts the previous parallelism in which the positive element precedes the negative one.

(εὐσδοθήσεται / יצלח)¹⁴¹ forever (11:17). One becomes rich (πλουτῶν / מתעשר) through diligence (προσοχῆς / תענות) and self-denial (σφιγγίᾱς) (11:18a).¹⁴² This somewhat conventional view of wealth¹⁴³ also appears in Sir 11:15-16, a variant occurring in one-fourth to one-half of the MSS.¹⁴⁴ Such a view comports with a Deuteronomistic theology and is regularly attested in Proverbs.¹⁴⁵ A classic formulation is Prov 22:4: “The reward for humility and fear of YHWH are riches (עשר) and possessions (כבוד)¹⁴⁶ and life (חיים).”¹⁴⁷ Ben Sira’s perspective represents a sharp divergence from Qoheleth’s rejection of the act-consequence relationship.

Yet Ben Sira upends this conventional view of wealth in 11:19c-d. Referring to the rich person, the author announces, “And this is the share of his reward (μερὶς τοῦ μισθοῦ αὐτοῦ / שכרו [יח.] . . .” (11:18b). In light of the positive connotation of “reward” (μισθός / שכר) and the context of 11:14-18a, one expects the reward’s share to

¹⁴¹ It is puzzling why the NRSV renders the verb as a causative (“his favor will bring lasting success”).

¹⁴² Ben Sira here echoes concerns in Qoheleth regarding industriousness (see e.g., Qoh 11:6). Though Skehan and Di Lella, *Ben Sira*, 239, note that the Hebrew may be translated literally as: “There is a man who becomes rich by afflicting himself” (emphasis his). He sees in 11:18 a description of a miser. He may be reading this text through the lens of 14:3-10, 14, which he cites as a parallel. The plans of this person to enjoy his goods (11:19ab) do not, however, comport with the figure of a miser.

¹⁴³ Sanders, *Ben Sira*, 3, classifies Proverbs and Ben Sira as “conventional wisdom,” and he assigns Job, Qoheleth, and Wisdom of Solomon to “unconventional” wisdom.

¹⁴⁴ σοφία καὶ ἐπιστήμη καὶ γνῶσις νόμου παρὰ κυρίου, ἀγάπησις καὶ ὁδοὶ καλῶν ἔργων παρ’ αὐτοῦ εἰσιν. πλάνη καὶ σκότος ἀμαρτωλοῖς συνέκτισται, τοῖς δὲ γαυριῶσιν ἐπὶ κακία συγγηρᾶ κακία. This variant also appears in the Hebrew text of MS. A:

[.] כמה ושכל / והביך דבר מיי הוא :

חטא ודרכים ישרים מיי הוא :

שכלות / וחן [..] לפשעים נוצרה ומרעים רעה ימם :

¹⁴⁵ See, e.g., Prov 3:1-6; 10:22. Paul Volz, *Hiob und Weisheit* (Die Schriften des Alten Testaments 3/2; 2d ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1921) treats Ben Sira and Proverbs together, without distinguishing between the two. Burkes, *God, Self, and Death*, 89, cites Sir 11:17 as an example of “the type of instructional wisdom exemplified in Proverbs.” For similarities regarding views of God and the world in Proverbs and Ben Sira, see Gammie, “Sage in Sirach,” 359.

¹⁴⁶ For כבוד as “possessions,” see Holladay, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 150-51. The Greek has δόξα.

¹⁴⁷ Crenshaw, “Shadow,” 211, sums up the view in Proverbs: “Those who please God escape Sheol and Abaddon’s ravenous appetite, for God rewards them with riches and length of days.” Such statements lead Crenshaw to conclude that in Proverbs the “threat of death thus undergirds morality” (216, ft 43).

be some sort of benefit.¹⁴⁸ This expectation is maintained in the initial description of the rich person’s “share of his reward”: “When he says, ‘I have found rest (ἀνάπαυσιν / תנו) and now I will eat from my good things (φάγομαι ἐκ τῶν ἀγαθῶν μου / י[.]וב[.]אכל)” (11:19a-b).¹⁴⁹ The expectation of a benefit is increased by the three-fold repetition of καί / ו in 11:19b, c, d. Following the first two lines of 11:19, one expects that the second καί / ו will introduce a thought which parallels the first two lines of 11:19. However, the third line of 11:19 disrupts this pattern: “but he does not know how much time will pass by (καὶ οὐκ οἶδεν τίς καιρὸς παραλεύσεται / [.]לפ [..]י מה עדי אלו).” This disruption is continued, through synonymous parallelism, in 11:19d: “and he will leave (καταλείψει / ב[.]ע) them to others and die (ἀποθανεῖται / תמ).¹⁵⁰

There is hardly any hint, prior to 11:19c, of a dilemma associated with being wealthy. Yet the shift in 11:19c illustrates a quandary for those who have riches. The uncertain timing of death renders one incapable of knowing how much longer one will be able to enjoy one’s goods.

If we read Sir 11:19c-d as a dilemma for the person who has wealth, 11:20-28 can be understood as a response to this predicament. Ben Sira offers suggestions and proscriptions to the crisis occasioned by the uncertain timing of death and the consequent transfer of one’s goods to another. The precise meaning of his first proposal, Στήθι ἐν διαθήκη σου (תקו) καὶ ὁμίλει ἐν αὐτῇ, is ambiguous because of the various options for translating διαθήκη / תקו (11:20a). The NRSV renders διαθήκη as a general “agreement,” to which one is enjoined to “stand by” and “attend to.” However, διαθήκη can also refer

¹⁴⁸ Perhaps the author is playing on the ambiguity of μισθός, which can also mean “requital” in a negative sense (Liddell-Scott, 1137). The Hebrew term (שכר) does not convey this same meaning.

¹⁴⁹ He echoes Qoheleth’s refrain regarding the appropriateness of enjoying and, in particular, eating the fruits of wealth.

¹⁵⁰ This final line clarifies that the παραλεύσεται in 11:19 refers to the rich person’s death.

specifically to a “disposition of property by will” or a “testament.” This is, indeed, the preferred meaning for the term.¹⁵¹

This reading is compelling given the preceding reference in Sir 11:19 to the crisis of not knowing when time will “pass away” and one “*will leave*” one’s goods to others and die. The multiple options for translating the Hebrew term חוק make a precise definition difficult. This difficulty is compounded with the (probable) shift(s) in meaning of חק from biblical Hebrew to the time of Ben Sira in the second century B.C.E.¹⁵² Benjamin Wright observes that διαθήκη in Ben Sira translates both ברית and חוק,¹⁵³ and he notes that whereas ברית usually refers to a “covenant,” חוק typically means “decree” or “statute.”¹⁵⁴ This difference in meaning obtains in the Hebrew Bible as well as Ben Sira.¹⁵⁵ Thus, the word חק “is used in a number of different ways in Sira, but not to mean ‘covenant.’” Wright claims that in Sir 11.20, חק “probably means ‘appointed task’ as it does in Exod 5.14.”¹⁵⁶ Yet what kind of appointed task? It is significant, notwithstanding its later date, that חוק is used in the Talmud to refer to a “due share (a fixed living)” that a

¹⁵¹ This is the first definition given in Liddell-Scott (394). It is also the first definition listed in BDAG, 228; Bauer notes that in Hellenistic times it was exclusively understood in this way. For such a use (διαθήκη as will/testament), see Lucian, *Dial. mort.* 19.3; 21.1-2; *Nigr.* 30; *Demon.* 44; *Gall.* 12; *Ind.* 19; Heb 9:16, 17. See also Gal 3:15, 17. The verb related to διαθήκη, διατίθημι, is also used to refer to the act of disposing of one’s goods or making a will for such a purpose (Liddell-Scott, 415; BDAG, 238; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 13.407; Oxyrynchus Papyri 104.4; 105.2; 489.3; Luke 22:29; Heb 9:16).

¹⁵² On the complex relationship between classical biblical Hebrew, late biblical Hebrew, and Qumranic Hebrew, see M. Kister, “Some Observations on Vocabulary and Style in the DSS,” in *Diggers at the Well: Proceedings of a Third International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls & Ben Sira* (ed. T. Muraoka and J. F. Elwolde; Leiden: Brill, 2000).

¹⁵³ Benjamin G. Wright, *No Small Difference: Sirach’s Relationship to its Hebrew Parent Text* (Septuagint and Cognate Studies 26; Atlanta: Scholars, 1989), 179, notes that there are fifteen “non-problematic occurrences” of διαθήκη in Ben Sira and that of these seven translate ברית and eight render חק.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 180; cf. BDB, 349.

¹⁵⁵ For חק as “portion, term,” “prescribed task,” “appropriate portion,” “due,” “allotted portion,” “appointed time,” “limit,” “law, regulation,” “prescription, rule,” see Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*; vol I: ח-ה; (Leiden/New York: Brill, 1994), 346. See also David J. A. Clines, ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (vol III: ט-ז; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 299, where חק is defined as “statute, decree, law, rule, instruction,” or an “expected allocation” of food or territory. In Qumranic Hebrew, the term is used as “statute” (4Q525 3.2₁) and “legal instruction” (4Q424 1₄).

¹⁵⁶ Wright, *No Small Difference*, 181.

father will leave to his sons (Erub. 54a).¹⁵⁷ This usage may be a part of a trajectory of this word's semantic domain that may also have had currency in Ben Sira's time. The close relationship between קח and the verbs חקח and קחק may also be suggestive since both verbs are used in Middle and Qumranic Hebrew to refer to the act of carving, engraving, or inscribing.¹⁵⁸

If we render διαθήκη / קח as “will” or “testament,” then Sir 11:20a implies that one has composed a will which describes the distribution of property. In this case, Ben Sira would be proposing that a proper response to the crisis outlined in 11:19b is to stand firm in the testament one has made and “attend” (ὀμίλει) to it (11:20a).¹⁵⁹ Because death's timing is uncertain, Ben Sira enjoins establishing a will and living in light of it. By doing so he would thus address one of Qoheleth's explicit complaints, namely the uncertainty regarding who will receive one's inheritance. Ben Sira avoids the meaninglessness that Qoheleth finds in one's goods being given to a fool or to one who did not labor for them (cf. Qoh 2:18-21) by establishing a testament that makes clear provision for the handing on of one's goods after one dies.

The uncertain timing of death and the transference of one's goods to another does not, as in Qoheleth (2:18-19, 22-23), lead Ben Sira to eschew diligent toil nor to regard

¹⁵⁷ Marcus Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, the Tamud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 438. Jastrow renders חוק as “law, rule, custom; assigned share, mark.”

¹⁵⁸ In middle Hebrew, קחק can mean “to hollow out, to engrave” or “to carve” (Is 22:16); “to inscribe” (Is 30:8; 49:16; Ezek 4:1; 23:14; Prov 8:27); “to enact, to decree” (Is 10:1); “what is decreed” (Prov 31:5). In Phoenician the term developed from “to carve” into “to stipulate in writing” (*HALOT*, 347). In Qumranic Hebrew, קחק can mean “cut, engrave, decree” (4Q185 1.24; 1QpHab 7₁₃; 1QS 10₁; 4QD^e 9.2₁₈) (*Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, 303-04). In Aramaic קחק means “to engrave” (Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* (2d ed.; Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar Ilan University, 2002), 213. In the Pual, חקח can mean “carved” or “engraved” (Ezek 8:10; 1 Ki 6:35) (*HALOT*, 347); or a “carved thing, engraving” (Exek 23:14; 4QShirShabb^f 15.24). It is used in the HithPael to mean engrave for oneself” (Job 13:27) (*Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, 302).

¹⁵⁹ The verb ὀμίλει, which can be rendered as “live together, associate, be conversant with, be engaged in . . .,” can also refer to “things or business which one has to do with . . .” (Liddell-Scott, 1222).

such toil as futile. To the suggestion that one stand in and attend to one's testament, Ben Sira adds that one is to "grow old" (παλαιώθητι) in one's work (ἔργω / אכתך) (11:20). Ben Sira's admonition is an implicit warning against those who might respond to death by abdicating work. It can therefore be understood as a rejoinder, if not to Qoheleth, then to the ideas he espouses (cf. Qoh 2:18-23). Ben Sira's exhortation not to abandon work continues after the first of three negative admonitions. After warning against marveling at the deeds (ἔργοις) of the sinner, Ben Sira enjoins one to trust (πίστευε / ירין[.]) the Lord and remain (ἔμμενε / קה) in one's toil (πόνω / אורי)¹⁶⁰ (11:21). This advice reveals none of the obsession one finds in Qoheleth with the countless problems associated with toil.¹⁶¹ For Ben Sira, one should remain steadfast in one's toil since the Lord can quickly improve one's fortune (11:21b-22). At the same time, Ben Sira warns against the two extremes of want and self-sufficiency (11:23-25).

Ben Sira's perceptions of death shape his advice on possessions. He views death (ἡμέρα τελευτῆς) as a judgment in which God repays (ἀποδοῦναι) one according to one's conduct (ὁδοῦς) (11:26).¹⁶² Associating death with a divine judgment functions as a warrant for his parenthesis regarding wealth.¹⁶³ One is to live and use one's goods in the light of a future judgment. The construal of death as a judgment is a sharp departure from Qoheleth for whom judgment plays a minimal, if any, role in death.¹⁶⁴ Ben Sira rejects the notion in Qoheleth that one's behavior has no influence upon one's death.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ Instead of "your toil," MS A and some Latin MSS read: "his light."

¹⁶¹ See Qoh 2:18-19; 4:4, 6, 8; 5:13-16; see also 2:22-23. See 5:17 for a hopeful portrayal of toil.

¹⁶² This verse is not extant in Hebrew.

¹⁶³ Skehan and Di Lella, *Ben Sira*, 240, point out that Ben Sira refers to "retribution in the present life, not in the afterlife."

¹⁶⁴ Though see Qoh 11:9.

¹⁶⁵ See Qoh 2:14-15; 8:14; 9:2-3; cf. 3:19-20.

Since the revelation of one's deeds (ἀποκάλυψις ἔργων / יגיד עליך) does not occur until death, one should not assess a person's character prior to their death (ἐν συντελείᾳ / סוף)¹⁶⁶ (11:27b). In particular, one should not call anyone blessed prior to death (πρὸ τελευτῆς / מוֹת לִפְנֵי מוֹת) (11:28a). Such evaluations are untimely since one will be known/remembered (γνωσθήσεται / ינכר) by how one ends (באחריתו) (11:28b).¹⁶⁷ Ben Sira here reflects a striking departure from Qoheleth for whom experience demonstrates no causal relationship between one's behavior in life and the manner or timing of one's death.¹⁶⁸ Ben Sira differs by holding out hope that one's death might function as a vehicle of respective reward or retribution.¹⁶⁹

The uncertain timing of death (11:19c) presents a potential dilemma for Qoheleth's recommendations regarding enjoyment.¹⁷⁰ Although Ben Sira and Qoheleth refer to the uncertain timing of death, the motif appears only peripherally in the latter.¹⁷¹ The lack of an explicit endorsement in Ben Sira of the man's plans to enjoy his goods may indicate a key difference from Qoheleth. The latter consistently enjoins enjoyment in light of death (Qoh 3:12-13; 5:17; 8:15; 9:7-10) and does not seriously consider alternative uses of goods. The absence in Ben Sira of an overt approval of the man's

¹⁶⁶ Skehan and Di Lella, *Wisdom*, 241, cite Qoh 7:2 as another instance where סוף is used "in the sense of '(death as) the end.'"

¹⁶⁷ According to the Hebrew. In the Greek version, a person will be known "by his children" (ἐν τέκνοις αὐτοῦ) (Sir 11:28b). This difference represents a significant divergence in the vehicle by which one is known or remembered. One Greek minuscule (358) has ἔργοις instead of τέκνοις, comporting more with the Hebrew text by shifting the focus from one's children to one's deeds.

¹⁶⁸ As Harrington, *Ben Sira*, 38, points out, it is not necessary to read these lines as a reference to life after death. Ben Sira "may have been only referring to the person's reputation and physical descendants."

¹⁶⁹ Burkes, *God, Self, and Death*, 91, cites Sir 7:36; 18:24; 28:6 as parallels to 11:28.

¹⁷⁰ Qoh 3:12-13; 5:17; 8:15; 9:7-10. Harrington, *Ben Sira*, 39, sees parallels between Sir 11:19 and Qoh 2:21; 4:8; 5:12-14; and Luke 12:16-21.

¹⁷¹ See Qoh 9:11-12. Qoheleth does not lament *how* one dies but the fact that one does.

plans to enjoy his goods might reflect ambivalence regarding the status of enjoyment as a meaningful act, given death's uncertain timing.

Ben Sira and Qoheleth highlight wealth's fragility in the face of death. Qoheleth's recommendations to enjoy goods can be understood as an effort to secure a vestige of control given the many uncontrollable aspects of death.¹⁷² Yet Qoheleth qualifies the extent to which one can effectively control wealth since it is given by God (and can therefore be removed). In Qoheleth and Ben Sira, wealth does not afford one control over one's plans. Death destroys any pretence of power over one's life that wealth might otherwise provide. For Ben Sira, it is the potential surprise of death's timing that causes an (unexpected) shift in tone regarding wealth. His contextualization of wealth within the purview of the uncertain timing of death reminds the wealthy that they can no more control the duration of their enjoyment than they can the moment of their death.

Ben Sira 11:14-28 shares many themes in common with Qoheleth. These include insatiability with wealth (Qoh 5:9-10 ; Sir 11:10);¹⁷³ death's uncertain timing (Qoh 9:11-12; Sir 11:19), plans (or recommendations) to enjoy one's goods (Qoh 3:12, 22; 5:17; 8:15; 9:7-10; Sir 11:19a, b); the inability to take one's goods beyond the grave (Qoh 5:14-15; Sir 11:19); the transfer of goods that coincides with death (Qoh 2:18-21; Sir 11:19d); toil (Qoh 2:18-19, 22-23; 4:4, 6, 8; 5:13-17; Sir 11:20, 21); and understanding possessions as a divine gift (Qoh 2:24-26; 3:13; 5:17-18; 6:2; Sir 11:14, 22; 32:13). Finally, Qoheleth and Ben Sira each treat possessions in a certain way because of their specific understanding of death.

¹⁷² See, e.g., Qoh 3:11-13; 5:9-6:2; 8:8-15; 9:1-10.

¹⁷³ So Skehan and Di Lella, *Ben Sira*, 238, who understand Sir 11:10cd to mean that "one will never have enough wealth, no matter how energetically one chases after it." He also cites Qoh 5:9-11 as a parallel.

The number of themes that Sir 11:14-28 and Qoheleth share in common suggest that Ben Sira was familiar, if not with Qoheleth, then with the same motifs regarding death and wealth that figure so prominently in Qoheleth.¹⁷⁴ Ben Sira's implied criticism of Qoheleth's recommendation regarding enjoyment suggests that Ben Sira engaged in a contested dialogue concerning the relationship between death and possessions, and the proper attitude toward each.¹⁷⁵

The respective views of death and possessions in Qoheleth and Ben Sira differ in important respects. Both perceive goods as divine gifts but Ben Sira employs this understanding to a different effect by situating it within a broader purview. Understanding possessions as divine gifts leads Qoheleth to recommend that they be enjoyed (2:24-25; 5:17-18). God, in Ben Sira's view, gives not only wealth but also poverty and death (11:14). The upending of the conventional view of wealth in Sir 11:19c does not contradict the declaration that "good things and evil things, life and death, poverty and riches are from the Lord" (11:14). Ben Sira's lack of lament and frustration (relative to Qoheleth) regarding death may be explained, in part, by his perception that God controls death. The greater willingness to accept death as a part of the human condition may be due to this premise that God is the source of life, death, poverty, and riches (Sir 11:14).

¹⁷⁴ Blenkinsopp, *Wisdom and Law*, 79, contends that Sir 11:18-19 shows that Ben Sira "seems to have been familiar" with Qoheleth. He cites this same text as an instance in which Ben Sira "echoes [Qoheleth's] sentiments." He lists Sir 7:36 and 18:22-23 as other texts that reflect awareness of Qoheleth. For arguments that Ben Sira was familiar with Qoheleth, see Sanders, *Ben Sira*, 3-4, ft. 2.

¹⁷⁵ Evidence of Ben Sira's effort to engage in this ongoing dialogue is, as Skehan and Di Lella note, 238, the dependence, "in thought and vocabulary," of Sir 11:10b on Prov 28:20. They note that Ben Sira has three of the four same words as Proverbs.

2.3.4 Ben Sira 14:3-19

Ben Sira 14:3-19 recommends specific uses of possessions in light of death's inevitability. The critique of a miser (14:3-10),¹⁷⁶ is followed with alternative proposals for the use of possessions (14:11-19).

The first fault of the miser is a failure to enjoy (εὐφραίνω / בטובתו) wealth (14:5b). There is no purpose for a miser (βόσκανος / רע עין) to have wealth (χρήματα / חרוץ) (14:3), since others will (eventually) live in luxury (τρυφήσουσι / יתבעבע) on the miser's goods (ἀγαθός / טובת) (14:4). Like Qoheleth, Ben Sira recognizes the tenuous nature of wealth given that death permanently ends the ability to enjoy one's goods. Unlike Qoheleth, Ben Sira does not make this observation with any sense of despondency. Death and the ensuing transfer of goods to another is not meaningless but merely one of life's realities. Ben Sira blames the inability to enjoy one's goods not on death (as Qoheleth does) but on the envy of the owner.

The second fault of the miser is a failure to be generous. Being envious is manifest in turning away (ἀποστρέφω) a face and disregarding (ὑπερορῶ) others (14:8).¹⁷⁷ Two reasons explain this lack of generosity. First, one who is evil (πονηρός / רע) to oneself cannot be good (ἀγαθός / יטב) to another (14:5a).¹⁷⁸ The miser only becomes generous (involuntarily) in death, when their goods are finally shared by others. Second, insatiability with wealth hinders sharing with others. Echoing a remark of

¹⁷⁶ One could also render this word as "envious one." On βόσκανος as "niggardly," see Liddell-Scott, Supplement, 67. Liddell-Scott cite Sir 14:3 as an example when βόσκανος means "mean" or "niggardly." See also Sir 18:18; 37:11; Prov 23:6; 28:2. Skehan and Di Lella, *Ben Sira*, 259, take βόσκανος as a reference to a miser.

¹⁷⁷ This verse is not extant in Hebrew. It is noteworthy that, *contra* Lee, Qoheleth never complains about such illiberality toward others. Lee thinks generosity plays a crucial role in Qoheleth's program. I do not see in Qoheleth the emphasis she describes, 71, that "one must also liberally share the means of enjoyment with those who may be in need" (Lee, *Vitality*, 71; 133-35).

¹⁷⁸ For a similar view, see Lucian, *Gall.* 14.

Qoheleth (5:10; 4:7-8), Ben Sira notes that a greedy person (πλεονέκτου / לוֹשֵׁל) is not satisfied (ἐμπίπλαται / טעמ) (14:9a). This dissatisfaction is related to an increase in the person's wicked injustice (ἀδικία πονηρὰ) (14:9b).¹⁷⁹ “The evil eye (ὀφθαλμὸς πονηρὸς / עֵין רַע) is jealous (φθονερός / טעני) over bread and there is want (ἐλλιπής / מהומה) at his table” (14:10).

Ben Sira enjoins three uses of possessions as alternatives to the miser's conduct (14:11-19). First, one is to treat oneself well. His advice to “do well to yourself (εὖ ποίει σεαυτόν / הִיטִיב לְךָ)” (14:11a) is an explicit contrast to the one who is evil to oneself (14:5a). Second, wealth is to be brought to the Lord in the form of worthy offerings (14:11b).¹⁸⁰ Third, one is to do good and give to a friend (14:13; cf. 14:11a).

Ben Sira employs the potential imminence of death as a warrant for these admonitions. Death (θάνατος / מוֹת) will not delay (χρονιεῖ / יתמהמה) and the decree of Hades is not shown to them (διαθήκη ἄδου οὐχ ὑπεδείχθη σοι / הֲוֹק לְשֹׂאוֹל לֹא הִגִּד לְךָ) (14:12b). People, in other words, are unprepared for death's quick and unannounced arrival. A reminder that life will eventually end (“before you die”) is the warrant for doing good and giving to a friend (14:13; cf. 14:11a).¹⁸¹

The inability to take goods beyond death is the primary warrant invoked by Ben Sira for treating oneself well. He recommends that one neither keep oneself

¹⁷⁹ Ben Sira 14:9b is not extant in Hebrew.

¹⁸⁰ This advice finds no parallel in Qoheleth. Ben Sira later instructs worshipers of the Lord to be “generous” (ἐν ἀγαθῷ ὀφθαλμῷ), not restraining the fruits of their hands (35:10). “Give to the Most High as he has given to you,” he commands, “and as generously (ἐν ἀγαθῷ ὀφθαλμῷ / בְּטוֹב עֵין) as your hand has found” (35:12). As a motive for such generous behavior, Ben Sira adds that the Lord “is the one who repays, and he will repay you sevenfold” (Sir 35:13).

¹⁸¹ Corley, *Ben Sira's Teaching on Friendship*, identifies the following as the significant treatments of friendship: 6:5-17; 9:10-16; 13:15-23; 19:13-17; 22:19-26; 27:16-21; 37:1-6.

”גורעו” (14:17). As in Qoheleth, the inevitability of death functions as the primary motive for enjoying possessions and (in Ben Sira) sharing it with others.

2.3.5 Conclusion

Ben Sira envisions wealth as potentially beneficial for its owner, for God, and for others. But this potentiality is only actualized in the act of giving. Since the finality of one’s death precludes future giving opportunities, one is to take advantage of such occasions before one dies. Because the timing of one’s death is uncertain (Sir 11:19c-d), one has all the more reason for being generous with others in the present moment.

The various uncontrollable facets of death lead Ben Sira to recommend enjoyment, generosity (with God, self, and others), and the giving of alms. These recommendations include more options than Qoheleth, despite the fact that the two texts hold similar perceptions of death. The following chart illustrates the manner in which Ben Sira’s perceptions of death relate to his recommendations regarding possessions.

<u>Death</u>	<u>Misc.</u>	<u>View/Role of God</u>	<u>Possessions</u>
Remember the end of life (7:36)			Give to poor (7:32)
... is preparing your own burial (21:8b)			Taking others’ money ... (21:8a)
Death is bitter ... (41:1a)			to one at peace with goods and prosperous (41:1b)
Death’s uncertain timing / transfer of goods to another / can’t take it with you (11:19c-d)		Life, death, poverty, riches are from the Lord (11:14); Lord’s gift is with righteous (11:17); Lord can quickly improve one’s fortune / Lord’s blessing is in the reward of the godly (11:21-22)	Limits enjoyment / Establish testament / Remain in toil (11:20-21)

Death as a judgment with reward (11:26) / Revelation of deeds occurs at death (11:26)			Reject desire for more goods and self-sufficiency (11:23-24)
Uncertainty of death's timing (14:12) / transfer of goods to another (14:4)	Inability to enjoy wealth (14:5)		Enjoyment / Generosity (14:8)
			Greed leads to insatiability (14:9a)
Death's potential imminence, uncertain timing, inevitability (14:12b, 17) / Inability to take goods beyond death (14:15-16)			Enjoyment (14:11a, 14, 16a), Gifts to God (14:11b), Generosity with friends (14:13)
		The Lord repays an almsgiver (17:23) Alms atone for sin (3:30)	
	No good comes to one who ... (12:3)		doesn't give alms (12:3)
On the day of calamity (5:8b).			dishonest wealth will not benefit ... (5:8a)
		One who blesses the poor will receive a blessing (7:32)	
One builds one's own burial mound when ... (21.8b)			building one's house with others' money (21.8a)

The following recommendations for the use of possessions emerge from these readings of

Qoheleth and Ben Sira:

<u>Enjoyment</u>	<u>Generosity</u>	<u>Giving</u>	<u>Alms</u>	<u>Inheritance</u>	<u>Critique Inheritance</u>
Qoheleth	with friends	to God			Qoheleth
Ben Sira	Ben Sira	Ben Sira	Ben Sira	Ben Sira	

2.4 The Interplay of Death and Possessions in the Epistle of *1 Enoch* (92-105)

The Epistle of Enoch (*1 En.* 92-105) frequently juxtaposes death and possessions. Notwithstanding its composition in an Aramaic milieu, its status as a Hellenistic Jewish text composed in the second temple period makes *1 Enoch* a fitting text to consider in light of Luke-Acts.¹⁸⁴ There is, moreover, evidence suggesting that Luke may have been familiar with the contents of *1 Enoch*.¹⁸⁵

Death and a Divine Judgment in the Epistle of *1 Enoch*¹⁸⁶

Although both Qoheleth and *1 Enoch* employ death as a warrant for their respective admonitions regarding possessions, each comes to conflicting, albeit overlapping, conclusions concerning the proper attitude toward possessions and their use. Whereas Qoheleth understands death as the end of one's being, and Ben Sira intimates that death might represent some type of judgment, *1 Enoch* insists that death is followed

¹⁸⁴ Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 8. He claims that the Epistle was included in the broader Enochic work between 175-150 BCE (26). He thinks the Greek translation was in place by the end of the first century (14). He bases this on the *terminus ad quem* provided by the *Epistle of Barnabas* (135-38 CE), the citation of *1 Enoch* 1:9 in Jude 14-15, and the Enochic material in Revelation.

¹⁸⁵ So Sverre Aalen, "St. Luke's Gospel and the Last Chapters of 1 Enoch," *NTS* 13 (1966-67): 1-13; George W. E. Nickelsburg, "Revisiting the Rich and the Poor in 1 Enoch 92-105 and the Gospel According to Luke," *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* (1998): 579-605. There is insufficient evidence for Aalen's suggestion that Luke may have been responsible for translating *1 Enoch* into Greek (13).

¹⁸⁶ My translation (of the Greek text) of 97:6-107:3 is from the Chester Beatty-Michigan Papyrus in Campbell Bonner, ed., *The Last Chapters of Enoch in Greek* (London: Christophers, 1937; Stuttgart: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968 reprint). I rely primarily upon the Greek (when available) since it is widely agreed that this predates the Ethiopic. Most scholars (e.g., Nickelsburg) believe an Aramaic original was translated into Greek, which was then translated into Ethiopic. Nickelsburg considers the Greek version "quite reliable in the material it reproduces" (14). His translation is based on the Greek (when it is available and preserves a similar or better text than the Ethiopic). Where the Greek is not available, I rely on the translation in George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, eds., *1 Enoch: A New Translation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004).

by a postmortem divine judgment.¹⁸⁷ The belief in a postmortem judgment pervades and undergirds the rhetoric of *I Enoch*, and is especially prominent in the Epistle.

The Epistle's attitude toward possessions is rooted in, and inseparable from, this belief in a postmortem judgment.¹⁸⁸ The use of wealth functions in the Epistle as a principal criterion upon which judgment is based. In a series of seven woes directed to those who "build iniquity and violence" and "build their houses with sin," *I Enoch* promises that all those who "acquire gold and silver in judgment"¹⁸⁹ will quickly perish" (94:6-7). The third, and lengthiest, of the seven woes is aimed directly at the wealthy. Here a correlation is established between sins associated with wealth (blasphemy, iniquity, not remembering the Most High) and judgment:

Woe to you, rich (*'abe'lt*), for in your riches you have trusted; from your riches you will depart, because you have not remembered the Most High in the days of your riches. You have committed blasphemy and iniquity; and you have been prepared for the day of bloodshed and the day of darkness and the day of great judgment (94:8-9)

I Enoch associates the wealthy with sins against God and envisions God repaying them accordingly.¹⁹⁰ "He who created you will overturn you; and for your fall there will be no compassion, and your Creator will rejoice at your destruction" (94:10-11). The judgment will "find" these sinners who "practice hatred and evil" (95:2).

Two subsequent series of woes directed against the rich and powerful (96:4-97:10) further presuppose a causal relationship between judgment and riches. Four of five

¹⁸⁷ This postmortem existence is not envisioned in Qoheleth or (the Hebrew text of) Ben Sira. The references in the latter to the afterlife in the Greek and Syriac translations are absent in the Hebrew mss.

¹⁸⁸ So Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 7.

¹⁸⁹ The precise meaning of this phrase is unclear. One MS. (T⁹) reads: "and in *the* judgment (*wabakwennanē*)"

¹⁹⁰ So Rodney A. Werline, "The Psalms of Solomon and the Ideology of Rule," in *Conflicted Boundaries in Wisdom and Apocalypticism* (ed. Benjamin G. Wright III and Lawrence M. Wills; SBLSS 35; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 69-87; 85.

woes in the first series are addressed to the wealthy and mighty (96:4-8). In a veiled critique of an ideology that associates wealth with divine blessing, *I Enoch* declares that sinners are convicted by their hearts, despite any veneer of righteousness that wealth provides (96:4a).¹⁹¹ Subsequent accusations leveled against the wealthy link their misappropriation of goods with the oppression of the weak.¹⁹²

The language and imagery of the Epistle contributes to the portrayal of the judgment as a legal proceeding in a courtroom. Evidence adduced in the judgment against the sinners includes the prayer of the righteous (97:3, 5a) and the reading of the “words of [their] lawless deeds (ἔργα τὰ μετασχόντα ἐν ἀνομίᾳ)” before God (97:6; cf. 98:8). The indictment and judgment of sinners is a tacit reason for the righteous to take courage¹⁹³ since the sinners will become “an object of contempt” and be “destroyed on the day of iniquity” (97:1). Implicit in God’s remembrance of the “destruction” of the righteous (97:2) is that their ruin has not been in vain. Those responsible for their devastation will be held responsible. The warning addressed to sinners, that they will not be able to flee on the day of judgment (97:3), functions as a comfort to those who have suffered at their hands.

The second set of woes explicitly links this judgment of the sinners to their unjust acquisition of wealth and the destructive self-sufficiency it engenders (97:7-10). To those

¹⁹¹ This “word” will testify against them as a “reminder of [their] evil deeds” (96:4b).

¹⁹² “You devour (*bal^ca*) the finest of the wheat, and quaff <wine from the mixing bowls>, while you tread on the lowly with your might” (96:5). See Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 468, for the difficulty involved in translating this phrase. Woes are also directed to those who drink water from every fountain (96:6a), commit iniquity, deceit (*gwehlut*) and blasphemy (96:7a), and the mighty who “oppress the righteous one” (96:8a). Nickelsburg, 427, understands “the righteous one” as a reference to the previously mentioned “lowly” in 96:5b. A judgment is prescribed for each of these offenses: “for quickly you will be repaid, and cease and dry up.” (96:6b); “it will be a reminder against you for evil” (96:7b); “for the day of your destruction will come. In those days, many good days will come for the righteous – in the day of your judgment” (96:8b).

¹⁹³ In the Ethiopic, they are to “have faith,” or “believe” (*ta’amanu*).

who acquire (κτώμενοι) gold and silver unjustly (οὐκ ἀπὸ δικαιοσύνης) (97:8a),¹⁹⁴

Enoch attributes the following words:

With wealth we have become wealthy (πλούτῳ πεπλουτήκαμεν), and we have acquired and procured possessions (τὰ ὑπάρχοντα ἐσχ<ήκ>αμεν καὶ κεκτήμεθα), and let us do whatever we wish,¹⁹⁵ for we have stored up (τεθησαυρίκαμεν) silver in our treasuries (θησαυροῖς), and many goods (ἀγαθὰ πολλὰ) in our houses, and as water they are poured out (ἐκκέχυται) (97:8-9).

The excessive acquisition of abundant wealth, illustrated by the metaphor of gushing

water, is linked to a presumption regarding doing whatever one wishes.¹⁹⁶ *I Enoch*

qualifies this unchecked desire by highlighting the temporary nature of unjustly acquired

riches and the judgment that such riches will bring:

You err (πεπλάνησθε)! For your wealth (πλούτος) will not remain (οὐ μὴ παραμείνη), but will quickly depart (ταχὺ <ἀπελεύσεται>) from you; for you have acquired everything unjustly (ἀδίκως πάντα κέκτησθε), and you will be handed over to a great curse (κατάραν μεγάλην παρα[δο]θήσεσθε) (97:10).¹⁹⁷

In a shift of address to the “wise” (98:1), *I Enoch* links wealth to excessive

luxury, indulgence, and the crossing of gender boundaries (98.2-3a).¹⁹⁸ The severe

judgment awaiting such people is depicted as the fitting result of their extravagance:

So you will be destroyed (ἀπολείσθε) together with all your possessions (ὑπαρχόντων), [and] all δόξης and honor (τιμῆς); and for dishonor (ἀτιμία)

¹⁹⁴ Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 474, suggests כִּשְׁמֵךְ אֲלֵךְ is likely the underlying Aramaic.

¹⁹⁵ The Ethiopic repeats the phrase: “. . . and we have done all that we have wished. And now let us do what we have wished.” See Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 469; Bonner, *Enoch*, 33.

¹⁹⁶ Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 474, sees in vv. 8-10 a two-fold indictment against the unjust acquisition of wealth and the purpose of this acquisition as “to secure their future.” I find no basis for his assertion that the “frequent use of the first person plural and the double reference to ‘all that we wish’ indicate a self-centered point of view that excludes generosity to others” (474).

¹⁹⁷ Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 474, notes that παραδίδομι is often used in relation to human and divine judgment.

¹⁹⁸ “For men will put on a beautiful work (κάλλος) as women, [and] a beautiful color more than virgins, in kingship and greatness and in power. And they will have silver and gold as food (ἔσονται δὲ ἀργύριον καὶ χρυσίον [. . .] αὐτοῖς εἰς βρώματα), and in their houses these will be poured out (ἐκχυθήσονται) like water, because they have no knowledge or understanding (ἐπιστήμην αὐτοὺς μηδὲ φρόνησιν μηδ)εμίαν <ἔχειν>” (98:2-3a).

and slaughter and great destitution (πτωχεία), their spirits will be cast into the fiery furnace (98:3b).¹⁹⁹

The “unrighteous deeds” of these wealthy people are “written down day by day, until the day of your judgment” (98:8).²⁰⁰ This second reference to the transcription of deeds (cf. 97:6) underscores the Epistle’s claim that the crimes of the wicked, left unchecked during life, will ultimately be punished. Such a claim would serve an important rhetorical purpose in responding to complaints or questions rooted in a Deuteronomistic understanding of retribution. The Epistle assures such complainants that, despite present appearances to the contrary, God will eventually punish the wicked for their crimes.

In *1 Enoch*, the temporal consequences of the future judgment underscore the ephemeral nature of wealth. The Epistle repeatedly utilizes the future judgment as an illustrative warrant for shunning wealth that is unjustly acquired and the sins that accompany such riches. The Epistle’s judgment of the wealthy, though similar to Ben Sira’s critique of the rich, is far more comprehensive in its castigation of all rich people.²⁰¹

1 Enoch’s depiction of judgment reassures those without wealth that whatever suffering they endure at the hands of the “rich and powerful” is not in vain and will not be forever neglected. Recompense will be given, but not in this present life.

¹⁹⁹ Most of this last phrase (“and for dishonor . . . fiery furnace”) is lacking in the Greek and is extant in the Ethiopic version. Four lines in the Greek text are missing after 98:3. See Bonner, *Enoch*, 35.

²⁰⁰ One Ethiopic MS. (m) reads: “until the day of your death and your judgment.”

²⁰¹ So Richard A. Horsley, “The Politics of Cultural Production in Second Temple Judea: Historical Context and Political-Religious Relations of the Scribes who Produced *1 Enoch*, Sirach, and Daniel,” in Benjamin G. Wright III and Lawrence M. Wills, eds., *Conflicted Boundaries*, 139.

2.4.2 Participating in a Conversation on Death and Possessions

The conception of a postmortem judgment leads Enoch to reject a number of ideas that are central to Qoheleth's worldview. Among the features prominent in Qoheleth that Enoch rejects are death as a warrant for enjoying life, the belief that the righteous and wicked experience death in the same manner; that one's conduct in life has no bearing on one's death; that death results in the destruction of one's being and memory; that the wicked are not punished for their deeds; and that the labors of the just are not rewarded. I am not arguing that *I Enoch* is replying directly to Qoheleth, but rather that these texts participate in a conversation in which death and possessions figure prominently.²⁰² Enoch's participation in a broader cultural exchange in which sapiential motifs played a significant role is suggested by the similarities between *I Enoch* and Ben Sira.²⁰³ It is possible, moreover, that Wisdom of Solomon 2-5 functioned in this conversation as a mediating text between Qoheleth and *I Enoch*.²⁰⁴

²⁰² Two Qoheleth fragments found at Qumran allow for the possibility that *I Enoch* was aware of (at least some) the content of the latter. F. M. Cross, "The Oldest Manuscripts from Qumran," *JBL* 74 (1955), 153, 162, dates 4QQoh^a between 175-150 BCE. This is, incidentally, the same twenty-five year period that Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 26, gives for the inclusion of *I Enoch* into the broader Enochic corpus. On this fragment, see also James Muilenberg, "A Qoheleth Scroll from Qumran," *BASOR* 135 (1954): 20-28. Eugene Ulrich, "Ezra and Qoheleth Manuscripts from Qumran (4QEzra, 4QQoh^{A, B})," in *Priests, Prophets and Scribes: Essays on the Formation and Heritage of Second Temple Judaism in Honour of Joseph Blenkinsopp* (ed. Eugene Ulrich et al.; JSOTSup 149; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 139-57, cites the first century BCE as the earliest date for 4QQoh^b. C. L. Seow, "Linguistic Evidence and the Dating of Qoheleth," *JBL* 115/4 (1996), 643-66, argues for dating Qoheleth to the Persian period ("between the second half of the fifth century and the first half of the fourth"(666). Kugel, "Qoheleth and Money," 45-47, also dates Qoheleth to the Persian period.

²⁰³ See Argal, *I Enoch and Sirach*; Benjamin G. Wright III, "Putting the Puzzle Together: Suggestions Concerning the Social Location of the Wisdom of Ben Sira," in *Conflicted Boundaries in Wisdom and Apocalypticism* (ed. Benjamin G. Wright III and Lawrence M. Wills; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 89-112. George W. E. Nickelsburg, "Social Aspects of Palestinian Jewish Apocalypticism," in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East* (ed. D. Hellholm; 2nd ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), 651, suggests that the Epistle of *I Enoch* may have been composed by the poor of Ben Sira's time.

²⁰⁴ It appears that Wisdom of Solomon responded to (and rejected) many of the central claims made in Job and Qoheleth. The "act-consequence" notion, repudiated in Job and Qoheleth, is embraced and defended in Wisdom of Solomon (Wis 1:8, 12; 2:18; 3:1, 10; 5:15; 19:13). On the attitude in Wisdom of

I Enoch and Qoheleth represent opposing responses to the incompatibility between their experience and a Deuteronomistic conception of divine retribution in the present life. Both texts recognize dissonance between the success of the wicked and the suffering of the just, on the one hand, and Deuteronomistic promises of divine retribution, on the other. But *I Enoch* and Qoheleth respond differently to this perceived dissonance. For Qoheleth, God does not exact justice in life but does provide opportunities, albeit fleeting, to enjoy life. Enoch maintains a sense of divine retribution but postpones it from the present life to the hereafter. For this reason he can enjoin “the souls of the just who have died, the just and the pious (ψυχὰὶ τῶν δικαίων τῶν ἀποθανόντων, τῶν δικαίων καὶ τῶν εὐσεβῶν)”²⁰⁵ not to lament their ill-treatment. Despite (and because of) their ill-treatment, he counsels them to:

take courage (θαρσεῖτε) . . . and do not grieve (λυπεῖσθε) that your souls (ψυχὰὶ) descended into Hades with grief (λύπης), and it did not turn out well (ἀπηντήθη) with your body of flesh (τῷ σώματι τῆς σαρκὸς ὑμῶν) in your life according to your observance of divine law (κατὰ τὴν ὀσιότητα ὑμῶν),²⁰⁶ since the days that you lived (ἦτε)²⁰⁷ were days of sinners and curses on the earth (102:4-5).

I Enoch anticipates potential rejoinders to his argument by articulating opposing perspectives that share a strong affinity with Qoheleth:

When you die (ἀποθάνητε), then the sinners will say,²⁰⁸ ‘The pious (εὐσεβεῖς) have died (ἀπεθάνοσαν) according to fate (εἰμαρμένην),²⁰⁹ and what have they gained by (ἐπί) their deeds? They have even *died like us* (ὁμοίως ὑμῶν

Solomon toward death, see M. Kolarcik, *The Ambiguity of Death in the Book of Wisdom 1-6* (AnBib 127; Rome: Istituto Biblico), 1991.

²⁰⁵ The Ethiopic reads: “Fear not, you souls of the righteous, and be hopeful, you who have died in righteousness.” Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 513, thinks the original Greek read: μὴ φοβεῖσθε ψυχὰὶ τῶν δικαίων, θαρσεῖτε οἱ ἀποθανόντες εὐσεβεῖς.

²⁰⁶ The Ethiopic reads “your goodness,” which Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 513, notes is a normal equivalent in the Ethiopic of *I Enoch*.

²⁰⁷ Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 513, emends this to ζῆτε.

²⁰⁸ Ethiopic has “about you (*lā’lēkemu*),” a phrase Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 513, believes was omitted from the Greek due to homoioteleuton.

²⁰⁹ Ethiopic reads: “as we die” (*kama motna*), an idea present in the Greek version (102:7a).

ἀπεθάνουσιν). Look, therefore, *how they die* (ἀποθνήσκουσιν) *with grief and darkness, and what benefit* (περισσόν) *do they have?*²¹⁰ (102:6-7).

This perspective of the “sinners” echoes an observation and consequent claim at the heart of Qoheleth’s program. First is the observation that the godly and sinners are subject to the same fate (Qoh 8:14; 9:1-3).²¹¹ That this specific issue elicited debate among second temple Jews is evident in the apparent rejection of Qoheleth’s views in Wisdom of Solomon.²¹² The parallels between *1 Enoch* 102-104 and Wis 1:16-5:23²¹³ point to the likely disputed nature of this conversation in some circles of second temple Judaism.

Second, the two questions posed by Enoch’s interlocutors imply that the godly (εὐσεβῆις) have gained nothing from their deeds and that there is no benefit (περισσόν) for them.²¹⁴ Qoheleth raises this same question and enjoyment is his specific response to the observation that the just and wicked meet the same fate (Qoh 8:15; 9:7-10). *1 Enoch* also associates the wicked with the activity of enjoyment and with Qoheleth’s specific proposal to “eat and drink” (φάγειν ... πίνειν) (Qoh 2:24; 3:13; 5:17; 8:15; 9:7):

Henceforth let them arise and be saved (σωθήτωσαν), and they shall forever see you eating and drinking well (καλῶς ὑμᾶς φαγεῖν καὶ πίνειν).²¹⁵ But, behold, they have died, and henceforth (and) forever they will not see the light.²¹⁶ Therefore indeed to plunder (ἀρπάσαι) and sin and steal ([λω]ποδυτεῖν) and

²¹⁰ Several Ethiopic MSS. add “over us.” Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 513, suggests the absence of this phrase in the Greek and some Ethiopic MSS is due to the similarity with the words that follow.

²¹¹ As are the wise and the foolish (Qoh 2:14-15).

²¹² So Vittoria D’Alario, “La réflexion sur le sens de la vie en Sg 1-6: Une réponse aux questions de HJob et de Qohélet,” in *Treasures of Wisdom: Studies in Ben Sira and the Book of Wisdom (Festschrift M. Gilbert)* (ed. N. Calduch-Benages and J. Vermeylen; Leuven: Leuven University, 1999), 329. Burkes, *God, Self, and Death*, 161, claims that Wisdom of Solomon “resoundingly answers the doubts of Job and Qoheleth.” Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 87, does not think Wis 2:1-9 is a rejoinder to Qoheleth.

²¹³ Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 59, observes these parallels and finds them significant.

²¹⁴ This reference to “benefit” (περισσόν) touches upon a chief interest and recurring theme in Qoheleth (Qoh 1:3; 2:11, 13, 15; 3:9; 5:8, 15; 6:8, 11; 7:11, 12; 10:10, 11; 12:9, 11).

²¹⁵ The Ethiopic reads: “Henceforth we are equal, and how will they arise (two MSS. have instead: ‘what will they receive’) and what will they see forever?”

²¹⁶ 102:8b is lacking in the Greek and present in the Ethiopic. Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 511, 513, includes them since “they are logically related to the previous lines” and they “appear to have dropped ... due to the similarity between 8a and 8d.”

acquire possessions (ἐγκτᾶσθαι) in a foreign country and see good days.²¹⁷ (You see therefore, the ones who justify themselves (οἱ δικαιοῦντες [ἑαυτ]ούς), of what sort their κατασ[τρο]φή was, for no righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) was found in them until they died (ἀπέθανον), and they perished and became as those who are not (ἐγένοντο ὡς οὐκ ὄντες), and their souls (ψυχαί) descended with grief (ὀδύνης) into [Hades] (102:8-11)

Whereas Qoheleth perceived a common destiny for all without regard for how one lives, *I Enoch* describes the fate of the righteous as markedly different from that of the wicked.²¹⁸ *I Enoch* reveals that, in contrast to claims made by Qoheleth,²¹⁹

good things and joy and honor have been prepared and written down for the souls of the pious who have died (ταῖς ψ[υχ]αῖς τῶν ἀποθανόντων εὐσεβῶν); and much good will be given to you in the place of your labors, and your lot will exceed the lot of the living. The souls²²⁰ of the pious who have died will come to life,²²¹ and they will rejoice; and their spirits (πνεύματα) will never perish (οὐ μὴ ἀπόλωνται), nor the memory (μνημόσυνον)²²² from the presence of the Great One for all the generations of eternity. Therefore, do not fear their reproaches (103:3-4).

In addition to rejecting claims that echo Qoheleth's view of the postmortem fate of the godly (εὐσεβεῖς), *I Enoch* counters the allegation (also present in Qoheleth) that death destroys one's being and one's memory. The πνεύματα of the pious, he alleges, will "never perish" (103:4a), and their memory will persist for "all the generations of eternity" (103:4b). Their ongoing postmortem existence and perpetual continuation of their

²¹⁷ Bonner, *Enoch*, 62, calls 102:9 "hopelessly corrupt."

²¹⁸ He buttresses this argument by swearing to the righteous that he "knows (ἐπίσταμαι) this mystery" (103:1). The Ethiopic text has: "And now I swear to you, the righteous, by the glory of the Great One, and by his splendid kingship and his majesty I swear to you that . . ." (trans. by Nickelsburg and VanderKam).

²¹⁹ He claims he has "read the tablets of heaven, and [has] seen the writing of what must be (γραφήν <τὴν> ἀναγκάϊαν)," asserting: "I know the things written in them and inscribed concerning you . . ." (103:2). The Ethiopic MSS have: "the holy writing" and "the writing of the holy ones."

²²⁰ Although the Ethiopic is "your spirits" (*manfaskemu*), Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 514, presumes the (missing) Greek text read ψυχᾶς.

²²¹ This last phrase ("and much good . . . come to life," absent in the Greek mss, is present in the Ethiopic; Bonner and Nickelsburg attribute its absence in the Greek to homoioteleuton (Bonner, *Enoch*, 64; Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 514). The translation from the Ethiopic is that of Nickelsburg and VanderKam.

²²² Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 514, has "their memory."

memory encourages the just to live righteously despite the lack of any perceived empirical benefit to doing so.

I Enoch articulates the perception, attested in Qoheleth and Job,²²³ that the wicked will avoid a divine judgment.²²⁴

And you,²²⁵ the dead of the sinners (οἱ νεκροὶ τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν), when you die in your sinful wealth, those who are like you²²⁶ will say about you, ‘Blessed are the sinners all their days, as many as they have seen in their life, and now they have died with goods and wealth, and affliction and murder they have not seen²²⁷ in their life. They have died gloriously (ἐνδόξως ἀπεθάνοσαν), and judgment (κρίσις) did not befall them²²⁸ in their life’ (103:5-6).

I Enoch rejects such a view, insisting instead that a severe judgment awaits the wicked:

You yourselves know (γινώσκετε)²²⁹ that into Hades they will lead (<κα>τάξουσιν) your souls; and there they will be in great violence (ἀνάγκη),²³⁰ and in darkness and in a snare and in a burning blaze, and into great judgment (κρίσιν) your souls will enter²³¹ in all the generations of eternity (τοῦ αἰῶνος).²³² Woe to you, there is no joy for you²³³ (103:7-8).

Rather than the great equalizer of the just and wicked (so Qoheleth), death is the beginning of an eternal, inseparable distinction between these two groups.

²²³ See esp. Job 21:7-34 in which the ungodly (ἄσεβεις) are said to reach old age with wealth (πλούτῳ), finish their lives with good things (ἀγαθοῖς), and fall asleep in the rest of Hades (21:7, 13). The gluttonous and the hungry die in the same manner (21:23-26).

²²⁴ Though see Qoh 3:17; 11:19.

²²⁵ Following the Ethiopic *alē lakemu*, Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 514, takes καὶ ὑμεῖς as a corruption of οὐαὶ ὑμεῖς, thus reading: “Woe to you”

²²⁶ The phrase “in your sinful wealth, those who are like you” is absent in the Greek and present in the Ethiopic.

²²⁷ The phrase, “and now they have died . . . they have not seen,” is absent in the Greek text, explained by Bonner and Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 514, as homoioteleuton.

²²⁸ “them” is absent in the Greek and present in the Ethiopic.

²²⁹ Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 514, notes that the Ethiopic (*ta’ammerewwonu*) reflects either a second plural imperfect or a second plural imperative and that the “indicative is out of place.”

²³⁰ Ethiopic reads: “and they will be wretched, their distress, great.”

²³¹ The Ethiopic here adds: “and the great judgment will be”

²³² Bonner, 93, translates αἰῶνος as “age.”

²³³ Ethiopic reads: “you will have no *peace*.”

The future judgment functions as a warrant for the righteous not to despair about the conditions of their present lives and the perceived absence of any divine justice or intervention. The author commands them not to utter admonitions that resemble a lament:²³⁴

For do not say, you who are just and devout (δίκ[αι]οι <καὶ> ὄσιοι) in life,²³⁵ “During the days of the²³⁶ tribulation (θλίψεως), we toiled laboriously (κόπους ἔκοπιόσαμεν); and every tribulation we saw, and many evils we found,²³⁷ and we were squandered (ἀνηλώμεθα) and we became few,²³⁸ and we have not found any to help (ἀντιλήμπτορα);²³⁹ we have been crushed (συν[τε]τριμμένοι <ἐσμὲν>) and utterly destroyed (ἀπλωώλαμεν), and we have been driven to despair (ἀπ[ηλ]πίσαμεθα) even to no longer know salvation (σωτηρία[ν]) from day to day. We hoped to become a head, we became a tail;²⁴⁰ we toiled (ἔκοπιόσαμεν) by laboring (ἐργαζόμενοι) and have not been master of the wages ([ὄ]ψωνίων);²⁴¹ we became food of sinners. The lawless loaded the yoke heavily upon us; the ones who lord over [us], our enemies, they goad us on and enclose us;²⁴² we sought where we might flee from them so that we might be revived (ἀναψύχ[ωμεν])²⁴³ (103:9-13).

2.4.3 Conclusion to the Epistle of *I Enoch*

The preceding citations suggest that *I Enoch* was familiar with perspectives articulated in sapiential texts concerning death and possessions. Although it is possible that *I Enoch* represents a direct response to Qoheleth, it is more likely that the former is participating in a broader, contested conversation in which these motifs figure

²³⁴ Compare, e.g., Psalm 44.

²³⁵ The Ethiopic reads: “Do not say of the righteous and good who are in life.”

²³⁶ The Ethiopic has “our tribulation.”

²³⁷ “and every tribulation we saw, and many evils we found” is absent in the Greek.

²³⁸ Ethiopic adds: “and our spirits, small; and we were destroyed.”

²³⁹ Bonner, 93, translates: “we have found none to take our part.”

²⁴⁰ Note the similarity in language with the blessings and curses in Deut 28:13, 44.

²⁴¹ Based on the Ethiopic, Nickelsburg restores and emends the Greek to καὶ το[ῦ κόπου]

<ή>μῶν οὐ κεκυριεύκαμεν.

²⁴² Ethiopic adds: “and to our enemies we bowed our necks, and they had no mercy on us.”

²⁴³ At this point three Greek lines are missing. Here the Ethiopic adds: “We complained to the rulers in our tribulation, and cried out against those who struck us down and oppressed us; but our complaints they did not receive, nor did they wish to give a hearing to our voice”

prominently. The positions in *I Enoch* are antithetical to several of the core tenets of Qoheleth. The righteous and the wicked, *I Enoch* insists, do not share the same fate after death. Nor does death represent an elimination of one's being, as it does for Qoheleth. The spirits of the pious "do not perish" but will "come to life and rejoice and be glad." The righteous will experience "good things and joy and honor" (103). Such rewards are "in place of their labors," intimating that those who labor do so not in vain, and will receive a reward for their toil. What happens to the righteous after death is preferable to one's experience during life. Nor does the memory of the righteous perish, as Qoheleth maintains. Finally, *I Enoch* insists that death should *not* provide a warrant for enjoyment (cf. Qoh 2:24-25; 3:12-13; 5:17; 9:7-10). The perception of death as a catalyst for a postmortem judgment leads *I Enoch* to chastise the greed of the wealthy and their enjoyment of their goods.

Including *I Enoch* in our survey demonstrates the diverse and contested nature of the conversation regarding death and possessions. The diverse perspectives among these multiple voices highlight the numerous alternatives available for participants in this dialogue. The following illustrates the ways in which perceptions of death are related to views of possessions.

<u>Death</u>	<u>View/Role of God</u>	<u>Possessions</u>
Postmortem judgment with retribution (94.6-11)		Those who build houses with sin and acquire gold and silver in judgment will perish (94.6-7)
Postmortem judgment with retribution (94.6-11)		The rich forgot the Most High in the days of their riches, committed blasphemy and iniquity, and are prepared for day of bloodshed/darkness and great judgment (94.8-9)
Postmortem judgment with retribution (95.2)	God rejoices at destruction of rich (95.2)	Judgment will find these sinners who practice hatred and evil (95.2)
Postmortem judgment with retribution (97.1, 3)		Critique unjust acquisition of wealth (97.8a, 10) which leads to judgment (97.10)
Postmortem judgment with retribution (98.3b, 8)		Destruction of wealthy with their possessions; spirits will be cast into fiery furnace (98.3b)
Postmortem judgment with retribution (98.3b, 8)		Ephemeral nature of possessions/wealth (98.3b)
Just and wicked do not share same fate (102.6-7); souls of wicked descend with pain into Hades (102.11); pious will have joy, honor, and a reward for their labors; their souls will rejoice; their spirits and memory will never perish (103.3-4)	Wicked will be led into Hades, a place of violence, darkness, burning blaze for all eternity; absence of joy (103.7-8)	Rejects suggestion that there is no benefit to the righteous (102.6-7) Rejects enjoyment (102.8), plunder, acquiring possessions in a foreign country (102.9-10)

When *1 Enoch* is added to the conversation in which Qoheleth and Ben Sira participate, the following range of motifs for the use of possessions emerges:

Critique of <u>Enjoyment</u>	<u>Enjoyment</u> Qoheleth Ben Sira	<u>Generosity</u> Ben Sira	<u>Alms</u> Ben Sira	<u>Inheritance</u> Ben Sira	Critique of <u>Inheritance</u> Qoheleth
<i>1 Enoch</i>					

This range, outlined above, highlights a key difference between *I Enoch* and the other wisdom texts I have examined, namely the absence in the former of any constructive options for the use of possessions.

2.5 The Interplay of Death and Possessions in *Testament of Abraham*

The intersection of death and possessions in *Testament of Abraham* shows that interest in this motif was not exclusively restricted to texts classified formally in the wisdom corpus. My inclusion of the *Testament* reflects and raises larger questions regarding wisdom and how it is best understood.²⁴⁴ At any rate, the *Testament's* apocalyptic features do not preclude the presence of sapiential motifs.²⁴⁵ Moreover, the date (1st-2nd century CE)²⁴⁶ and the Hellenistic Jewish character of the *Testament* make it

²⁴⁴ I am less interested in wisdom as a literary genre and more interested in wisdom as representing a way of thinking about reality. As Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 1, points out, wisdom literature is a “macro-genre that embraces several literary forms,” and in the HB wisdom “is characterized by a particular view of the world or theological perspective.” Blenkinsopp, *Wisdom*, 2, designates “sapiential literature” as a subset of wisdom, thus not requiring that a text belong to a narrowly established set of genres to be classified as sapiential. He cites Song of Songs and the Eden narrative in Genesis as examples of literature that are “sapiential” but whose genres would, *prima facie*, preclude them from being classified as “wisdom” (2, 4, 6-9; cf. 42). Katherine Dell, ‘Get Wisdom, Get Insight’: *An Introduction to Israel’s Wisdom Literature* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), 4, distinguishes between wisdom as an attribute and as a genre. André Caquot, “Israelite Perceptions of Wisdom and Strength in the Light of the Ras Shamra Texts,” in *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien* (ed John G. Gammie et al.; New York: Union Theological Seminary, 1978), 25-33; 25, speaks of *hokmâ* as “a human and divine capacity and not as a current of thought or a literary genre.” *Testament of Abraham* illustrates many of the difficulties with assigning texts to a single genre. Like *I Enoch*, the *Testament* consists of disparate literary forms and therefore resists being classified into one genre.

²⁴⁵ John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 248, 251. Sapiential and apocalyptic characteristics frequently occur together. So John J. Collins, “Generic Compatibility,” 165-85. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Wisdom and Law in the Old Testament: The Ordering of Life in Israel and Early Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 173-78, uses the label “apocalyptic wisdom” to refer to texts which evince aspects of both these traditions. For problems involved with constructing an artificially rigid boundary between wisdom and apocalyptic literature, see the collection of essays in *Conflicted Boundaries in Wisdom and Apocalypticism* (SBLSS; ed. Benjamin G. Wright III and Lawrence M. Wills; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005).

²⁴⁶ Most place *T. Ab.* before 115-117 CE. So Mathias Delcor, *Le Testament d’Abraham* (SVTP 2; Leiden: Brill, 1973), 67-68; Dale C. Allison, *Testament of Abraham* (CEJL; Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003) 38-39. E. P. Sanders, “Testament of Abraham,” in James H. Charlesworth, ed. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. I (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1983) 875, dates it to ca. 100 CE.

an apt comparative text for Luke’s parable.²⁴⁷ The *Testament of Abraham* represents a shift from propositional discourse to a story in which the interplay of death and wealth is presented through the narrative vehicles of plot and characterization. Among the four texts we examine in this chapter, its form is most similar to the narrative style of Luke’s parables. My analysis of the *Testament* will highlight the motifs of death and possessions, and the intersection between the two.

2.5.1 Death as the Primary Plot Device

Death is the central obsession of the *Testament of Abraham*.²⁴⁸ The plot revolves around, and is moved forward by, a conflict between God’s numerous efforts to inform Abraham of his imminent death, and Abraham’s myriad attempts to delay and avoid his own death.²⁴⁹ The first line of the Testament alludes to Abraham’s death,²⁵⁰ and shortly thereafter the reader is warned of the fate awaiting Abraham:

But even upon this one came the common and inevitable, bitter cup of death and the inscrutable²⁵¹ end of life.

ἔφθασε δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦτον τὸ κοινὸν καὶ ἀπαραίτητον τοῦ θανάτου πικρὸν ποτήριον καὶ τὸ ἄδηλον τοῦ βίου πέρας (1:3).²⁵²

Allison, 40, claims that the shorter recension (as it appears in mss. E) likely appeared by the second century. For a fuller discussion of issues related to dating, see Allison, 34-40.

²⁴⁷ Allison, *Testament*, 30.

²⁴⁸ So notes Allison, *Testament*, 50; Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 250.

²⁴⁹ So Nickelsburg, “Structure,” 86.

²⁵⁰ “Abraham lived the span of his life (τὸ μέτρον τῆς ζωῆς αὐτοῦ), nine hundred and ninety-five years, and he lived the entire, complete state of his life in quietness and meekness and justice” (1:1). Reference to his death is more explicit in the opening line of the short recension: “ . . . when the days for Abraham to depart (παρασπῆναι) drew near” (1:1).

²⁵¹ On ἄδηλος as “inscrutable,” see Liddell-Scott, 21. It can also mean “unknown, obscure.”

²⁵² My translation is of the long recension in Francis Schmidt, *Le Testament grec d’ Abraham: Introduction, édition critique des deux recensions grecques, traduction* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1986). Cf. *The Testament of Abraham: The Greek Recensions* (trans. Michael E. Stone; Society of Biblical Literature, 1972). For arguments that the longer recension precedes the shorter recension, see Allison, *Testament*, 12-27, esp. 14-15; Montague Rhodes James, *The Testament of Abraham: The Greek Text Now First Edited with an Introduction and Notes* (TS 2/2; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

In the first action of the narrative, God instructs the archangel Michael to tell Abraham “about his death (θανάτου)” (1:4). God’s concern that Abraham learn of his death is evident both in repeating this instruction to Michael (“announce (ἀνάγγειλον) αὐτὸν περὶ τοῦ θανάτου” 1:6) and in telling Michael to confirm (πληροφόρησον) to Abraham that he is about to die (1:6-7). This repetition and the detailed nature of the second instruction reflect God’s intent that Abraham understand clearly the imminent approach of his death.

This intent is thwarted when Michael, in his first encounter with Abraham, fails to convey God’s message clearly. Rather than telling Abraham about his death (θανάτου), he ambiguously declares: “I was sent from the great king; I am carrying off with (ἀποκομίζομαι) a successor of his true friend, for the king is even summoning (προσκαλεῖται) him to himself” (2:6). After Michael confesses his inability to pronounce the death sentence upon Abraham, God says he will cast “the mention of his death” (ρίψω τὴν μνήμην τοῦ θανάτου) into Isaac’s heart, so that Abraham’s son will see his father’s death in a dream (4:8). Michael is to interpret the dream, thereby enabling Abraham to “know his own end” (γνώσεται τὸ τέλος αὐτοῦ) (4:8). God underscores the importance of rightly interpreting the dream so that Abraham may “know the sickle of

1892) 49; G. H. Box, *The Testament of Abraham: Translated from the Greek Text with Introduction and Notes* (London: SPCK, 1927), xii-xv; Sanders, “The Testament,” 872; cf. George W. E. Nickelsburg, Jr., “Eschatology in the Testament of Abraham: A Study of the Judgment Scene in the Two Recensions,” in *Studies on the Testament of Abraham* (ed. Nickelsburg; SBLSCS; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1972): 23-64; Nickelsburg, “Structure and Message in the Testament of Abraham,” in *Studies*, 85-93; Jared Warner Ludlow, *Abraham Meets Death: Narrative Humor in the Testament of Abraham* (JSPSup 41; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 152-80. For the chronological priority of the shorter recension, see Nigel Turner, “The Testament of Abraham: A Study of the Original Language, Place of Origin, Authorship, and Relevance” (PhD diss., University of London, 1953), 48-100, 194-257; Francis Schmidt, “Le Testament d’Abraham: Introduction, édition de la recension courtre, traduction et notes” (2 vols.; PhD diss., University of Strasbourg, 1971), 115-24. See Allison, 12-27, for issues related to chronology.

death and the secret end of life (τὴν τοῦ θανάτου δρεπάνην καὶ τὸ τοῦ βίου ἄδηλον πέρασ) (4:11).²⁵³

Michael interprets the dream as he is instructed and informs Abraham that he will take his soul from him and that Abraham is “about to leave the worldly life and depart to God” (7:8-9). Abraham refuses, telling Michael: οὐ μὴ σε ἀκολουθήσω (7:12).²⁵⁴ This is Abraham’s first of seven such refusals to acquiesce to death (7:12; 8:2, 12; 15:10; 16:16; 19:4).²⁵⁵ The importance of Abraham’s refusal is indicated by its verbatim repetition by Michael to God (8:2), and again by God who asks Abraham why he said it (8:12).²⁵⁶ The focus of a conversation between God and Michael is the latter’s insistence that no one can escape death (8:9). God returns Michael to Abraham to finish the original task with which he was charged.

The remaining narrative consists primarily of Abraham’s repeated efforts to delay (and thereby avoid) death. Although he admits he is not immortal (ἀθάνατος) but mortal (θνητός) (9:5), Abraham attempts to prolong his death by asking if he may see the entire inhabited world and all the creations (9:6a). Yet his qualified willingness to depart after this tour (“if I now depart from this life ...”, ἔὰν μετέλθω,) reflects his hope that he will somehow manage to avoid death (9:6b).²⁵⁷

Abraham’s global tour delays his own death, but it also results in the deaths of countless others. For at Abraham’s request the Lord destroys numerous wicked people.²⁵⁸

²⁵³ God in fact redirects Michael’s concern regarding eating food at Abraham’s table to the more pressing issue of interpreting the dream correctly (4:9-11).

²⁵⁴ The intensity of Abraham’s refusal is indicated by the use of the aorist subjunctive with emphatic negation.

²⁵⁵ Abraham’s refusals are absent in the short recension.

²⁵⁶ Cf. 15:10; 16:6; 19:4.

²⁵⁷ Allison’s translation, 200, misses this nuance: “when I depart from (this) life.”

²⁵⁸ At Abraham’s request, God sends wild beasts to devour thieves (10:4-7), opens up the earth to swallow a couple committing sexual immorality (10:8-9), and sends fire upon men who were trying to steal

Others have noted the irony in Abraham's appeal for God to end the lives of sinners given his own unwillingness to obey God's call to face death.²⁵⁹ The tour is eventually stopped lest Abraham destroy "the whole creation," and Abraham repents (μετανοήση) of his merciless treatment of sinners (10:15; 14:11).²⁶⁰

After returning home,²⁶¹ Abraham refuses again to acquiesce to death, telling Michael a second time, οὐ μή σε ἀκολουθήσω (15:10). As before (cf. 7:12; 8:2, 12), this phrase is relayed by Michael to God (οὐκ ἀκολουθῶ σε) and in return by God to Michael (οὐκ ἀκολουθῶ σε) (15:12, 13).

This refusal is the catalyst for God summoning Death (τὸν θάνατον), who enters the narrative for the first time as a personified character.²⁶² God commands Death to take Abraham "and bring him to me" (16:1-5). Abraham remains vigilant in his efforts to avoid death, insisting to Death, as he did to Michael, οὐ μή σε ἀκολουθήσω (16:16).²⁶³ Death rebuffs Abraham's command to depart from him, telling him that he will not depart until he takes Abraham's πνεῦμα (17:3). After Abraham's second request for Death to leave, Death declares that he will not depart until he takes Abraham's ψυχή (19:3). Abraham refuses to follow him, saying he will only go with Michael. Death pleads with Abraham to "lay aside every desire and follow me . . ." (20:3). Abraham resists and asks to be left "a little longer" so that he may rest in his bed (20:4). After

another man's possessions (10:10-12). In the short recension, those killed include adulterers, slanderers, and people about to commit murder (12:2-11).

²⁵⁹ George W. E. Nickelsburg, "Summary and Prospects for Future Work," in *Studies on the Testament of Abraham*, 295.

²⁶⁰ The narrative never addresses the apparent conflict between Abraham's hospitality of "everyone" (1:2) with his merciless efforts at destroying the wicked.

²⁶¹ Sarah dies at this point in the short recension (12:15).

²⁶² Death is also personified in the Egyptian Stela of Taimhotep. For Jewish and Greco-Roman parallels see Allison, 323-25. Burkes, *God, Self, and Death*, 57, notes an occasional personification or mythological treatment of death in Job (e.g., 28:22), and notes that Qoheleth never personifies death (79).

²⁶³ Allison, 332, takes Abraham's question regarding why Death has "come here" (16:14) as a stalling strategy.

Isaac, Sarah, and male and female slaves enter the room and mourn, Abraham finally “entered into the faint (ὀλιγωρίαν) <of death>” (20:7).²⁶⁴ Death invites Abraham to kiss his right hand, telling him, “cheerfulness and life and power will come to you” (20:8). The narrative concludes with Abraham finally encountering death. After his burial the angels “escorted his precious soul . . .” and ascended into the heavens (20:12).

2.5.2 The Inevitability of Death

Chief among the points illustrated in the narrative is that death is inevitable and inescapable.²⁶⁵ This chord is first struck at the story’s inception: “But even upon this one came the common and inevitable (τὸ κοινὸν καὶ ἀπαράιτητον), bitter cup of death and the secret end of life” (1:3).²⁶⁶ The primary conflict in the narrative, Abraham’s repeated attempts to delay (and thereby avoid) the death announced by God, addresses concerns related to the fear of death and the feasibility of avoiding it. The narrative insists that someone as virtuous as Abraham may delay death but that no one can avoid it. The impossibility of avoiding death is evident in Abraham’s failed efforts to escape death.

The unavailability of death is explicitly addressed in a discussion between God and Michael. After one of Abraham’s many refusals to follow Michael into death, God instructs Michael to return and declare to Abraham:

Or do you not know that *all* (πάντες) the ones from Adam [and Eve] have died (ἀπέθανον)? And neither have the kings been immortal (ἀθάνατοι); no one [from the] ancestors has escaped (ἐξέφυγεν) the treasure of death (θανάτου

²⁶⁴ Allison, *Testament*, 357, notes that the meaning of ὀλιγωρίαν θανάτου (cf. 17:19; 18:8) is uncertain.

²⁶⁵ Allison, *Testament*, 86, suggests that the language of *T. Ab.* is reminiscent of that found on Jewish epitaphs.

²⁶⁶ Allison, *Testament*, 63, 72, translates ἀπαράιτητον as “inexorable.” Cf. Wis 16:4, 16.

κειμήλιον); *all* (πάντες) have died (ἀπέθανον);²⁶⁷ *all* (πάντες) have gone (καθείλοντο) to Hades; and *all* (πάντες) are gathered (συλλέγονται) by the sickle of death (θανάτου δρεπάνη) (8:9).

The four-fold repetition of πάντες underscores the universality and all-encompassing nature of death. No one, not even righteous, hospitable Abraham, is exempt from its fate. As Death notes, “For seven ages I destroy the world and lead *all* down to Hades, kings and rulers, rich and poor, slaves and free” (19:7).

Michael’s failure to lead Abraham to death is contrasted with Death’s success in this endeavor. Death’s relentless pursuit of Abraham is evident in the following encounter:

Abraham rose and went into his house, and Death *followed him there*. Abraham went up to his dining room. Death *also went up*. Abraham rested upon his couch. Then death *also came, and stood at his feet* (17:1).

The narrative’s message is clear: Death will not relent (as Michael did) until Abraham succumbs to its grasp. Death expresses as much in his exchange with Abraham:

Then Abraham said, ‘Go away from me, because I want to rest in my bed.’ But Death said, ‘I will not go away until I take your spirit from you’ (17:2-3).

A similar exchange occurs later:

And going up into his couch [Abraham] rested. Death also came, and he stood before him (19:1).

Abraham said to [Death], ‘Go away from me, for I want to rest, for my spirit is enveloped by faintness.’ And Death said, ‘I will not withdraw from you until I take your soul’ (19:2-3).²⁶⁸

²⁶⁷ Ibid, 195, notes the idea that “all have died” was often expressed on ancient Greek and Jewish epitaphs.

²⁶⁸ See the Stela of Taimhotep (*AEL* III:63) for a similar characterization of death.

The lengthiest reprieve Abraham earns in his attempt to delay death is the tour he takes of the entire world. One wonders if Abraham's request for the Lord to punish sinners is yet another attempt to postpone and avoid his own death.²⁶⁹

The *Testament of Abraham* thus illustrates the point made propositionally in Qoheleth and Ben Sira regarding the inevitable and unavoidable nature of death.²⁷⁰

Abraham's repeated attempts to avoid death indicate that he has yet to accept death as a personal reality, an acceptance (and insistence) one finds in Qoheleth and Ben Sira. The *Testament of Abraham* therefore gives voice to opposing sides of an argument: those who would seek to avoid death and those who deem such a task futile. Abraham's elevated status in the eyes of God and the narrator buttresses the unavoidable nature of death. If the righteous, hospitable Abraham, whom God so clearly favors, cannot escape death, what hope can there be for anyone else? This, at least, is implied in the introduction to the *Testament* (cf. 1:2-3). The depiction of Abraham illustrates a particular view of humanity, namely that people have a propensity to avoid death, and that this inclination is futile.

2.5.3 Wealth and Possessions

Wealth, next to death, is the second most prevalent motif in the *Testament of Abraham*.²⁷¹ Attention is repeatedly drawn to Abraham's vast amount of riches. His possessions include a field (χώρα), oxen, horses, and numerous servants (2:1, 7-9).²⁷² At one point during their conversation Michael pointedly asks Abraham about his wealth:

²⁶⁹ Nicklesburg, "Structure," 295, sees in the destruction of the sinners and Abraham's attempts to evade his own death a message about the inevitable nature of death.

²⁷⁰ See, e.g., Qoh 2:14-17; 3:1-2a, 19-22; 9:1-6; Sir 14:17.

²⁷¹ It is odd that Allison, *Testament*, 48-52, does not include the topic of wealth in his discussion of the "literary themes and leading ideas" of the work.

²⁷² The number of his servants (cf. 15:5; 20:7) is given as "twelve" (2:1) and "seven thousand" (17:18).

“For was my king not rich in much trade (πλούσιος ἐν ἐμπορίᾳ πολλῇ), even having authority (ἐξουσίᾳ) over people and all sorts of cattle?” (2:11). Many of Abraham’s goods are items that are regularly associated with wealth such as linen, purple cloth, byssus, and “valuable and renowned incense” (4:2-3).²⁷³

The narrative consistently identifies Abraham’s wealth as a divine gift. On three occasions God specifies the source of Abraham’s wealth:

For I blessed him as the stars of heaven and as the sand by the seashore, and he makes a good living, having many possessions, and is very rich (1:5)

... for I have blessed him as the stars of heaven and as the sand by the seashore (4:11)

I blessed you above the sand of the sea and as the stars of heaven (8:5)

Each of these three statements is issued during a discussion over Abraham’s death. In addition to explaining the source of the patriarch’s abundant wealth,²⁷⁴ they also function as a reason, albeit somewhat unnecessary, for God’s summoning Abraham to death. The literary context of the third statement supports this contention. After Michael tells God of Abraham’s first refusal to follow him to death (8:2), God instructs the archangel to remind Abraham of all God has given him (8:5-7). God’s blessing underscores both God’s right to call Abraham to death and the expectation that Abraham will dutifully follow this request. God’s subsequent query, asking Abraham why he has resisted God and Michael, points to the perceived incongruity between God’s material blessing and

²⁷³ The same terms, πορφύραν καὶ βύσσον, appear in Luke 16:19.

²⁷⁴ Allison, *Testament*, 78, rightly notes that whereas in Gen 22:17 the “stars” and “sand” refer to the number of Abraham’s descendants, here in *T. Ab.* they refer to the amount of his wealth. He cites the following references to Abraham’s vast wealth: 1QapGen 21:3; 22:29-32; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.165; *Sefer Ha-Yashar* 3:7-9. Genesis describes Abraham as “very rich” (Gen 13:2; cf. Gen 24:1).

Abraham's refusal to acquiesce to death (8:9). God's speech about the inevitability of death suggests that, blessing or not, Abraham has no choice but to follow death.

The emphasis on Abraham's wealth as a divine gift comports with the view repeated in Qoheleth and Ben Sira.²⁷⁵ The *Testament* differs from Qoheleth, however, by suggesting that one should be as willing to embrace God's invitation to death as one is to receive God's provision of wealth. Qoheleth's primary interest is the ability (or lack thereof) to enjoy one's goods prior to death. Also explicit in *T. Ab.* is an emphasis on God as the source of death and wealth (8.9; cf. Sir 11:14).²⁷⁶

2.5.6 Making a Testament

God is determined not only that Abraham shall die but that he shall be forewarned about his death. God can presumably end Abraham's life at any point. God does not require Abraham's willingness to die, yet God chooses to inform Abraham about his upcoming death. The primary reason given for warning Abraham about his death is so that he might make provision for his goods. This reason is repeated no less than five times throughout the narrative. On each occasion God instructs Michael regarding Abraham:

Speak to him about death (περὶ τοῦ θανάτου), *in order that he will make disposition concerning his affairs* (ἵνα διατάξεται περὶ τῶν πραγμάτων αὐτοῦ), for I blessed him as the stars of heaven and ... he is exceedingly rich (πλούσιος πάνυ); and above all he is just, good, and hospitable (δίκαιος, ἀγαθὸς καὶ φιλόξενος καὶ φιλόχρηστος μέχρι τέλους) (1:4-5)²⁷⁷

²⁷⁵ See, e.g., Qoh 5:17, 18a, 18b; 6:2.

²⁷⁶ The repeated insistence that Abraham's wealth is a divine gift might reflect a concern to clarify that his wealth was not unjustly acquired. That wealth was not universally assumed to be a divine stamp of approval is clear in *I Enoch* 97:7-10. Unlike Qoheleth, Ben Sira or *I Enoch*, *T. Ab.* gives no indication that wealth poses a potential risk or danger to its owner. So Allison, *Testament*, 79.

²⁷⁷ The short recension reads: "for your days have drawn near so that you might put your house in order (διοικήσεις), before you are removed (μεταχθῆναι) from the world" (1:3).

But only interpret well the dream so that Abraham might know the sickle (δρεπάνην) of death and the uncertain end of life (βίου ἄδηλον πέρας) and *in order that he might make disposition concerning all his possessions* (ἵνα ποιήσῃ διάταξιν περὶ πάντων τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐτοῦ), for I blessed him as the stars of heaven and as the sand by the edge of the sea (4:11)

God tells Michael to tell Abraham that he sent Michael “to you so that you might know the departure (μετάστασις) from the world and so that you might make disposition (ποιήσῃς διάταξιν) concerning your house and concerning all your possessions (ὑπαρχόντων), and that you might bless your beloved Isaac (8:11)²⁷⁸

For behold his end is near (ἤγγικεν) and the boundlessness of his life is complete (τελειούται) and *he might make disposition concerning his house and everything as much as he desires* (ποιήσῃ διάταξιν περὶ τοῦ οἴκου αὐτοῦ καὶ πάντα ὅσα βούλεται) (15:1)

In the fifth instance Michael relays God’s instruction (cf. 15:1) directly to Abraham in the form of a command:

Make disposition concerning everything which you desire (ποιήσον διάταξιν περὶ πάντων ὧν ἐὰν βούλῃ) for the day has come near (ἤγγισεν) in which you are about to depart from the body to come still once to the Lord (15:7)²⁷⁹

The only explicit reason provided for why God delays Abraham’s death is so that the latter can make plans for the distribution of his estate.²⁸⁰

A common pattern appears in the language utilized to convey the idea that Abraham is to make plans concerning the disposition of his estate. Four of the five announcements use the formula ποιέω + διάταξιν, with the first announcement using

²⁷⁸ So that Abraham might bless Isaac is a second reason given for the advance warning given to Abraham. God concludes by asking, “Or do you not know that if I permit death to come to you, then I would be able to see whether you would come or not come?” (<ἢ οὐκ οἶδας> ὅτι ἐὰν ἐάσω τὸν θάνατον ἀπελθεῖν σοι τότε ἂν εἶχον ἰδεῖν κἂν ἔρχῃ κἂν οὐκ ἔρχῃ;) (8:12).

²⁷⁹ Michael neglects to mention “his house” (cf. 15:1).

²⁸⁰ Anitra Bingham Kolenkow, “The Genre Testament and the Testament of Abraham,” in *Studies*, 140.

the verbal form (διατάσσω).²⁸¹ In the final announcement the verb διατάσσω occurs in the imperative mood, signaling a shift in address both literarily (towards Abraham) and rhetorically (towards the reader). The reader joins Abraham in being directly commanded to prepare for one's death by planning for the distribution of one's goods. Abraham's ultimate failure to make plans for the distribution of his estate thus constitutes direct disobedience of the divine will. In this way, Abraham is the antitype of the kind of person the reader is exhorted to become.

It is noteworthy that Abraham's specific refusal is not to die but to make disposition concerning his possessions. One wonders if Abraham refuses to make a testament because the act itself connotes too vividly the reality, unavoidability, and imminence of death.²⁸² Constructing a testament requires thinking of one's own mortality, and reflects some level of acceptance that one will die. The making of a testament is thus one possible step in the process of facing one's death.

2.5.4 Hospitality and Death

Hospitality is preeminent among the many virtues attributed to Abraham. It is the primary way in which Abraham relates to and utilizes his possessions. The narrative's first description of Abraham highlights his hospitality. He is a "righteous man [who] was extremely hospitable (πάνυ ὑπήρχεν φιλόξενος ὁ δίκαιος)" (1:1).²⁸³ His hospitality consists in the fact that he

²⁸¹ Allison, *Testament*, 78, notes that in the middle voice the verb διατάσσω can mean "to make testamentary dispositions."

²⁸² So argues Nicklesburg, "Structure," 88.

²⁸³ Abraham is also said to have "lived all the years of his life in quietness, gentleness, and righteousness, (ἡσυχία καὶ πραότητα καὶ δικαιοσύνη, (1:1).

welcomed (ἑδέχετο) everyone, πλουσίους καὶ πένητας, kings and rulers, cripples and helpless, friends and strangers, neighbors and travelers – all alike did the devout, all-holy, righteous, hospitable (φιλόξενος) Abraham welcome (ὑπεδέχετο) (1:2).²⁸⁴

Abraham's hospitality is on full display during his time with Michael. Abraham arose and "went to meet him, in the manner as was his habit to go and meet strangers and welcome [them]" (ὑπηντήθη αὐτῷ καθότι ἔθος εἶχεν τοῖς ἐπιξένοις προσυπαντᾶν καὶ ἐπιδεχόμενος) (2:2). Michael receives no special treatment from Abraham but the same hospitality that Abraham is said to extend to everyone.²⁸⁵

The frequent use of "stranger" to describe those for whom Abraham cares is one of the ways the motif of hospitality is emphasized. Abraham has two horses brought so that he and Michael ("this stranger," ἐπίξενος) might sit on them (2:9). After asking Isaac to draw water from the well, Abraham washes the feet of Michael ("this stranger," ἐπιξένου) and weeps over "the stranger" (τὸν ξένον) (3:7-9).²⁸⁶ The language of "entertaining" (ἐπιξενισθέντος, ἐπιξενισθεῖς) is also used to describe Abraham's care for Michael (4:1,3).²⁸⁷

In his exercise of hospitality, Abraham enacts Ben Sira's exhortations to share generously with one's neighbor. The act of hospitality represents both a specific subset of generosity and a development from one understanding of how wealth can be shared (from

²⁸⁴ Shortly thereafter God characterizes Abraham as one who "more than all is just (παρὰ πάντων δὲ δίκαιος), "good and hospitable and loving goodness to the end of his life" (ἀγαθὸς καὶ φιλόξενος καὶ φιλόχρηστος μέχρι τέλους) (1:5).

²⁸⁵ In the short recension, Michael recalls Abraham's care for the visiting angels (2:10; Gen 18).

²⁸⁶ In the short recension, Abraham describes this activity as "showing hospitality (ἐπιξενωθέντος)" (3:6). Abraham acknowledges that this will be the last time he washes the feet "of a person receiving our hospitality" (ξενιζομένου) (3:7, short recension; cf. 3:9). Abraham refers to Michael as "this stranger" (ξένω τούτῳ) (4:2).

²⁸⁷ Isaac is to prepare for Abraham and Michael two couches and a table "with an abundance of every good thing" (4:1-2, 4). Abraham charges Isaac to beautify the chamber by spreading out linen, purple cloth and byssus, to burn various valuable and renowned incense, to fill the house with sweet-smelling plants from the garden, and to light seven oil lamps (4:2-3).

the giving of wealth or goods to inviting someone to share one's goods through communal participation).

Testament of Abraham depicts a causal relationship between Abraham's hospitality and his death. Abraham's hospitable treatment of Michael (at first) causes the angel to refuse to warn Abraham about his death. After experiencing Abraham's hospitality (cf. 4:1-4), Michael reports to God that he is unable to pronounce "the mention of death" (τὴν μνήμην τοῦ θανάτου) to Abraham, "that just (δίκαιον) man" (4:6). Michael explains his difficulty, telling God that he has not seen the like (ὅμοιον) of Abraham upon the earth, one who is "merciful and hospitable, just, truthful, pious, abstaining from every evil matter (ελεήμονα καὶ φιλόξενον, δίκαιον, ἀληθινόν, θεοσεβῆ, ἀπεχόμενον ἀπὸ παντὸς πονηροῦ πράγματος)" (4:6).²⁸⁸ In the short recension, Michael similarly tells God that he did not tell Abraham about his death since "he is your friend and a just (δίκαιος) person who welcomes strangers (ξένους ὑποδεχόμενος)" (4:10). One might translate this participial phrase as: "he is a just person *because* he welcomes strangers." Michael repeats a second time his inability to announce the "mention of death" (τὴν μνήμην τοῦ θανάτου), implying that Abraham's virtues are the reason for this inability (4:6).²⁸⁹

The hospitality and generosity of Abraham are a deterrent or mitigating factor in announcing Abraham's death. Abraham's hospitality may also be the reason for Michael's failure to relate to Abraham the precise message God gives him regarding the

²⁸⁸ This explanation only occurs in some MSS (EC DLM) and is lacking in A B I J Q.

²⁸⁹ This is another variant, occurring in the MSS EC DLM.

latter's death (2:3-6).²⁹⁰ One can also read God's instruction to Michael to return to Abraham and "do whatever he says to you ... ," as a response to, and consequence of, Abraham's hospitality (4:7).

Abraham's hospitality also influences the manner in which the character Death appears to him. Death appears in a beautiful form to Abraham because of the man's "just deeds" (δικαιοσύνη), his "boundless hospitality" (ἄμετρον τῆς φιλοξενίας) and the greatness of his love for God (17:7).²⁹¹ Death clarifies that his appearance differs depending on whether the person to whom he appears is δίκαιος or ἁμαρτωλός (17:7-8). This marks an explicit contrast with Qoheleth who insists there is no qualitative difference between the death of the δίκαιος and the ἁμαρτωλός (Qoh 8:14; 9:1-3).²⁹² This view in *T. Ab.* does comport with the belief in *1 Enoch* that the just and wicked will experience antithetical treatment in the judgment.

Hospitality influences not only one's death but also one's postmortem experience. The narrative concludes with a parenthetic aside, inviting readers/hearers to "emulate the hospitality" (τὴν φιλοξενίαν ζηλώσωμεν) of Abraham so that "we might be worthy of eternal life" (20:15).²⁹³ This conclusion reflects the narrative's central concern with the causal relationship between hospitality and death. One might read this conclusion as an *inclusio* with the opening description of Abraham (cf. 1:1-2). The hortatory shift in the

²⁹⁰ Instead of telling Abraham about his imminent death, per God's instructions, Michael cryptically tells him: "I was sent from the great king; I am carrying off with a successor of his true friend, for the king is even summoning him to him" (2:6).

²⁹¹ Death's affirmation of Abraham's hospitality is noteworthy in that Abraham does not offer Death the hospitality he provides to Michael. Allison, 86, notes that in chapter 16 Abraham "offers his guest nothing and shuns his company."

²⁹² Qoheleth claims that both the δίκαιος and the ἄσεβής share the same fate in death and that ὁ ἀγαθός shares the same fate as ὁ ἁμαρτάνων (Qoh 9:2).

²⁹³ *Contra* Allison, 409, who maintains that this exhortation "cannot be original, for it misses the central concerns of the story." He claims that *T. Ab.* "does not, despite chap. 1, focus on Abraham's 'hospitality'" Yet descriptions of Abraham's hospitality occur in chapters 1, 2, 4, and 17.

narrative's conclusion makes one of the consistent plot threads explicit. As Abraham's hospitality endeared him to God, readers are encouraged to likewise be hospitable in the hope that by doing so they will similarly influence their future deaths.²⁹⁴ One cannot cheat death, but there are strategies available for influencing the manner of one's death and one's experience after death. Hospitality, a practice one can control, is offered as a strategy for coping with the uncontrollable nature of death.

2.5.7 Conclusion

The *Testament of Abraham* might evince an effort to locate meaning, given the reality of death, in a controllable act. For Qoheleth, this act was frequently eating, drinking, and enjoying life and toil. For Ben Sira it was using one's wealth to give to oneself, God, one's friends, and remaining committed to one's testament. The *Testament of Abraham* suggests that one can, in the face of death, find meaning in determining who will receive one's goods as an inheritance. It is noteworthy that Qoheleth critiques the provision of an inheritance as bankrupt given the uncontrollable vicissitudes associated with its transmission. The following chart shows illustrates the relationships in *T. Ab.* between death and possessions.

²⁹⁴ The Romanian version expands this hortatory conclusion: "Likewise should we, my beloved brothers, receive travelers, strangers, the poor, and everyone, that we may give them rest and hospitality in our houses; that we, too, might be found worthy of the gift of eternal life" (Ed. Roddy, 52).

<u>Death</u>	<u>View/Role of God</u>	<u>Possessions</u>
		Abraham is rich and hospitable (1.1-5)
Inevitable (19:7; cf. 17:1-3; 19:2-3)		
	Wealth is a divine gift (8:5)	Abraham should welcome death (8:2-9)
Death can be delayed if ...		One practices hospitality (4:1-7)
Death appears in a beautiful form ...		To one who is hospitable (17:7)
Eternal life is available ...		To one who practices hospitality (20:15)
Death's inevitability (1:4-5; 4:11; 8:9, 11; 15:1, 7)	Wealth is a divine gift (1:5; 4:11; 8:5)	Making a will/testament to dispose of possessions (1:4-5; 4:11; 8:11; 15:1, 7)
Postmortem Judgment (11:1-12; 12:1-15; 13:4-11; 14:2-3)		

The following shows the respective advice on possessions in the four texts we have analyzed.

<u>Inheritance</u>	<u>Enjoyment</u>	<u>Generosity</u>	<u>Hospitality</u>	<u>Alms</u>	<u>Giving to God</u>
Ben Sira <i>T. Ab.</i>	Qoheleth Ben Sira	Ben Sira	<i>T. Ab.</i>	Ben Sira	Ben Sira
Critique of <u>Inheritance</u> Qoheleth	Critique of <u>Enjoyment</u> <i>I Enoch</i>				

2.6 Conclusion to Chapter Two

The examination of these four texts demonstrates that the sapiential conversation regarding the intersection of death and possessions consisted of diverse and often conflicting perspectives. This spectrum of diverse points of view reflects the existence of a lively contested conversation over the use of possessions, given the unavoidability and

inevitability of death. These texts evince a concern for how possessions can be used meaningfully given one’s inevitable departure from life. In each text, the specific recommendation for how one should use possessions corresponds to a particular understanding of death. This does not mean, however, that different authors with the same view of death proposed using possessions in the same way. On the contrary, the same view of death often resulted (in different authors) with disparate recommendations regarding the use of possessions. The chart below indicates the relationship in these texts between perceptions of death and proposals for how to use possessions.

<u>Death</u>	<u>Enjoy</u>	<u>Generosity</u>	<u>Gifts to God</u>	<u>Alms</u>	<u>Hospitality</u>	<u>Will / Inheritance</u>
Uncertain aspects re: Inheritance	Qoh					
Inevitable	Ben Sira	Ben Sira	Ben Sira			<i>T. Ab.</i>
All return to dust	Qoh					
“Can’t Take it with you”	Qoh / B. Sira	Ben Sira	Ben Sira			Ben Sira
Common fate of just and wicked (8:14)	Qoh					
Destroys everything	Qoh					
Uncertain timing	Ben Sira	Ben Sira	Ben Sira			Ben Sira
Delaying Death					<i>T. Ab.</i>	
Judgment				Ben Sira		
Postmortem Judgment / (diff fate for just/wicked)					<i>T. Ab.</i>	

The interplay of death and possessions entails a spectrum of options for understanding death and corresponding options for attitudes regarding possessions and their use. Options for understanding death include whether death entails a postmortem judgment (*Testament of Abraham*, *I Enoch*) or whether the just and unjust experience equal treatment in death (*Qoheleth*).²⁹⁵ Each author wrestles with the uncertain (and potentially unknowable) timing of death. Closely related is the question raised in *T. Ab.* regarding whether death is timely or untimely. Each author also acknowledges, to a greater or lesser extent, the inability to take one's goods beyond the grave.

A recurring theme around which many of the perceptions of death and wealth revolve is control. For each of these authors death represents the ultimate loss of control. This lack of control includes and extends to the timing of one's death, the identity of the recipient of one's goods after death, ensuring how (and if) one will be remembered after death, and what (if anything) one will experience after death. Many of the perspectives concerning the use of possessions reflect attempts to find ways of exerting control given the lack of control associated with death. Each author's advice regarding possessions can be understood, in part, as a coping strategy in the face of the loss of control posed by death. Enjoyment, generosity, hospitality, making a will, and giving to God are disparate uses of wealth, but they each represent efforts to establish control over an area of one's life. In light of this it is significant that Ben Sira and *T. Ab.* establish a causal relationship between one's use of possessions and one's treatment in death. Using possessions becomes for them a specific vehicle whereby one can exert some control over death.

In chapters three and four, I broaden my examination of wisdom texts whose focus is the intersection of death and possessions by looking at Egyptian (chapter 3) and

²⁹⁵ Ben Sira was more ambivalent on this point.

Greco-Roman texts (chapter four). Doing so will demonstrate that the contested conversation regarding death and possessions was not restricted to Hellenistic Judaism. We will also be able to develop and expand the repertoire of perspectives regarding death and possessions, one that will be employed in our analysis of the Rich Fool parable (chapter five).

3. The Interplay of Death and Possessions in Ancient Egyptian Literature

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter highlighted a range of diverse perspectives in four Hellenistic Jewish texts regarding the intersection of death and possessions. Specific proposals for the use of possessions included enjoyment (Qoheleth, Ben Sira), generosity (Ben Sira), giving to God (Ben Sira), alms (Ben Sira), hospitality (*T. Ab.*), and creating an inheritance for the disposition of one's goods (*T. Ab.*, Ben Sira). Each of these recommendations was rooted in a particular perception of death. I suggested that these diverse views reflect the existence of a sapiential conversation regarding death and possessions.

This conversation regarding the interplay of death and possessions also finds expression in ancient Egyptian and Greco-Roman texts. The aim of this chapter is to describe the diverse and often conflicting nature of this conversation as it appears in ancient Egyptian literature. In chapter four, I analyze the interplay of death and possessions in two representatives of Greco-Roman literature, Lucian and Seneca. In chapter five, I situate Luke's parable and its immediate literary context within this conversation on the intersection of death and possessions. The function of chapters two, three, and four in the broader dissertation is to frame and describe the type of conversation with which Luke 12:16-21 is engaged. I will accordingly treat the texts in this and the following chapter not as background material whose sole purpose is to illumine Luke's parable but as texts that frame the conversation within which the parable is situated.

Chief among the reasons for including Egyptian literature is the prevalence in this material on the intersection of death and possessions. Ancient Egyptian literature shares numerous motifs related to death and possessions with Hellenistic Jewish texts on the one hand, and with Luke's parables on the other. This is not surprising since Egyptian culture influenced Hellenistic Judaism and the general Hellenistic milieu out of which Luke's literary work developed.¹ Moreover, specific Egyptian parallels have been noted in Luke's parables of the "Rich Fool" and "Lazarus and the Rich Man."² Although I focus primarily on Egyptian texts from the Late Period, I will occasionally refer to earlier materials since many texts contemporary to Luke-Acts, such as Papyrus Insinger, emerge from and are in conversation with a lengthy and influential trajectory.

¹ See Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 136-40, for ways in which Jewish legal observance was influenced by Hellenistic and Egyptian culture in Alexandria. For a historical treatment of the Jews in Egypt, see A. Kasher, *The Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985); J. M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora, from Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE—117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1996). For the influence of Egyptian culture upon Hellenism, see Christina Riggs, *The Beautiful Burial in Roman Egypt: Art, Identity, and Funerary Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Garth Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); J. Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites: The London-Leiden Magical Manuscripts and Translation in Egyptian Ritual (100-300 CE)* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Jan Quaegebeur, "Cultes égyptiens et grecs en Egypte hellénistique: L'exploitation des sources," in *Egypt and the Hellenistic World: Proceedings of the International Colloquium, Leuven, 24-26 May 1982* (ed. E. van't Dack, P. van Dessel, and W. van Guch, Louvain: Orientaliste, 1983), 303-24. For examples of the ways that Egyptian culture influenced aspects of Alexandrian society, see Marjorie S. Venit, *Monumental Tombs of Ancient Alexandria: The Theater of the Dead* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002). The claims of Artapanus, that Abraham taught astronomy to Pharaoh, that Moses introduced the cult of Isis, and invented the hydraulic lift and alphabet, show that some Jews argued for compatibility between aspects of Egyptian culture and Judaism. So Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 157.

² On Egyptian parallels with the parable of the "Rich Fool," see Klostermann and Gressmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 497; Christopher F. Evans, *Saint Luke* (TPI New Testament Commentaries; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 522. On Egyptian parallels with the parable of "Lazarus and the Rich Man," see Hugo Gressmann, "Vom reichen Mann und armen Lazarus: Eine literargeschichtliche Studie," *AbhKPAW phil.-hist. Kl. 7*, 1918 (Berlin: Königliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1918); K. Grobel, "' . . . Whose Name Was Neves,'" *NTS* 10 (1963-64): 373-82; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, II:1126-27.

3.1.1 Positive and Negative Depictions of Death and the Afterlife

Ancient Egyptian culture evinces a thoroughgoing preoccupation with death, one that is evident both in its burial practices and extant literature.³ Although the belief in the reality of the afterlife is widespread in ancient Egyptian literature,⁴ differences exist regarding the nature and quality of this afterlife experience. Some texts depict a positive afterlife experience,⁵ and others portray the afterlife as a terrifying ordeal.⁶ A Late Period text describes the afterlife as both positive and negative, demonstrating the ambivalence with which Egyptians could view the postmortem experience.⁷

These contrasting depictions of the afterlife underscore both the dread and hope with which people anticipated their postmortem existence. The uncertainties surrounding the afterlife is reflected in the (uncertain) hope expressed in the Late Period Instruction of

³ See, e.g., Alan H. Gardiner, *The Attitude of the Ancient Egyptians to Death and the Dead* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935); Jan Zandee, *Death as an Enemy: According to Ancient Egyptian Conceptions* (Studies in the History of Religions 5; Leiden: Brill, 1960); Alan Jeffrey Spencer, *Death in Ancient Egypt* (2nd ed.; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984); Philippe Derchain, "Death in Egyptian Religion," in *Mythologies* (ed. Yves Bonnefoy; vol 1; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 111-115; Henk Milde, "'Going out into the Day': Ancient Egyptian Beliefs and Practices concerning Death," in *Hidden Futures: Death and Immortality in Ancient Egypt, Anatolia, the Classical, Biblical and Arabic-Islamic World* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1994): 15-34; Jan Assman, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt* (trans. David Lorton; Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005).

⁴ Some exceptions will be cited below. Egyptian primary sources are cited from Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings* (3 vols.; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973, 1976, 1980).

⁵ Many Ancient Egyptian wisdom texts depict a favorable postmortem existence that lasts for eternity. Such examples can be found from the Middle Kingdom (the funerary stela of Iki, *AEL* I:194; the stela of Nebankh, *AEL* I:194) and the New Kingdom. The stela of Iki refers to the ability to use and enjoy possessions in the afterlife. Texts from the New Kingdom, in contrast to Qoheleth, speak of the afterlife as a place where one can breathe, drink, maintain control of one's senses, and use possessions (The Prayers of Paheri, a private tomb inscription, *AEL* II:17). The New Kingdom Harpers song from the Tomb of Neferhotep (*AEL* II:115-16) questions views, such as those found in the Song from the tomb of King Intef, that belittle the "land of eternity" (*AEL* II:115-16). "The Instruction of Any," a didactic text from the New Kingdom, also speaks positively of the afterlife (*AEL* II:138).

⁶ Such examples come from the Middle Kingdom (The Story of Sinuhe, a prose tale, *AEL* I:231) and the Late Period (Instruction of Ankhsheshonq 19.17; *AEL* III:75; Stela of Taimhotep, *AEL* III:63; Stela of Isenkhebe, *AEL* III:59).

⁷ The Speech of Thothrekh son of Petosiris, a biographical inscription. On the one hand, the afterlife is described as the "city of eternity" and the "abode of the perfect souls" (*AEL* III:53). This positive characterization of the afterlife seems at odds with a subsequent description of it as a "land of deprivation (*g3w*)." Lichtheim, *AEL* III:54, n. 4, understands *g3w* as "narrowness, want." She notes that lamentations of premature death typically refer to the postmortem existence as a place of want.

Ankhsheshonq, “May existence always follow death” (10.25).⁸ At its worst, death represents the archetypal threat to any semblance of control that one has over life. The perception of a paradisiacal afterlife can be understood as an attempt to secure control in the face of death. Depicting the afterlife in gloriously flattering terms has the potential both to mitigate fears of what lies beyond the grave, and provide some semblance of control in the face of death.⁹

3.1.2 The Uncertain Timing of Death

A primary uncontrollable facet of death is its timing and manner, the uncertainty of which is frequently commented upon in ancient Egyptian texts. These unknown variables are understood as intrinsic to death and contribute to the perception of death as an uncontrollable event.

The death of a young child, a motif in two biographical inscriptions from the Late Period (and texts from earlier eras), underscores death’s indiscriminating and omnipotent grasp. The speech of Thothrekh, son of Petosiris, refers to the grief people will experience when they hear how death snatched him when he was a small child. News of his death caused lamentation among the townspeople and mourning among his friends.¹⁰ The stela of Isenkhebe laments the death of a young girl, “driven from childhood too early!” while breastfeeding.¹¹ Her oppressive conditions in death (thirsting for water,

⁸ *AEL* III:167.

⁹ So Lichtheim, *AEL* II:119:

“No other nation of the ancient world made so determined an effort to vanquish death and win eternal life. Individual thinkers might increasingly lose faith in the promise of eternal life, and might adopt attitudes of resignation and even skepticism. But the majority appear to have clung to the hope of a bodily afterlife ... Eternal life had come to be conceived in the most grandiose terms: the dead were to become godlike and join the company of the gods.”

¹⁰ *AEL* III:53.

¹¹ *AEL* III:59. Children were known to breastfeed in ancient Egypt until the age of three years.

being isolated, and engulfed in the dark) invite readers to grieve over her death. These two examples illustrate the possible sense of powerlessness that some ancient Egyptians felt in the face of death.¹²

3.1.3 Death Accompanied by a Postmortem Judgment

A common fixture in depictions of the postmortem experience is a judgment in which one is either rewarded or punished. Such retributive views of postmortem justice can be found in texts from the Old Kingdom,¹³ the transition to the Middle Kingdom,¹⁴ and the Late Period.¹⁵ In such texts, one's deeds are often the primary factor determining the type of judgment one receives. The Late Period biographical inscription on the tomb of Petosiris envisions a "balance" and a "scale and weight" used to "reckon each man for his deeds on earth."¹⁶ In Setne II, another Late Period text, a similarly envisioned balance weighs the "good deeds against the misdeeds."¹⁷ The one whose good deeds outnumber their misdeeds enters among the gods of the tribunal of the lord of the nether-world,

¹² The uncertain timing of death also figures prominently in texts from the Middle and New Kingdoms. "The Instruction of Any," a New Kingdom text, cites death's uncertain timing as a reason to consider death on a regular basis during one's life: "Do not go out of your house," he advises, "without knowing your place of rest" (*AEL* II:138). Although there is no admonition to enjoy life, this Instruction parallels Qoheleth's conviction that a life well lived is only possible if one is attentive to the reality of death. One is ignorant not only of death's timing but also of anything concerning the future. "Trust not the morrow before it has come; none knows the trouble in it" (The Eloquent Peasant, didactic literature from the Middle Kingdom, *AEL* I:177). In "The Instruction of Any," the uncertain timing of death functions as a reason for constant readiness for death (*AEL* II:138).

¹³ "<Thus justice is done> to him who does what is loved, <and punishment> to him who does what is hated. Thus life is given to the peaceful, death is given to the criminal" ("The Memphite Theology," a pyramid text, *AEL* I:55).

¹⁴ See, e.g., the Instruction to King Merikare (*AEL* I:101-02).

¹⁵ See, e.g., the biographical tomb inscription of Petosiris (*AEL* III:46).

¹⁶ The Long Biographical Inscription (No. 81), from the Late Period (*AEL* III:46). The Speech of Thothrekh son of Petosiris, a biographical inscription from the Late Period, also speaks of a reckoning after death (*AEL* III:53).

¹⁷ Setne Khamwas and Si-Osire, Demotic literature from the Late Period (*AEL* III:140). Whoever has more misdeeds than good deeds is given to the "Devourer" (who belongs to the lord of the netherworld) and is destroyed. "His *ba* is destroyed together with his body, and he is not allowed to breathe ever again" (*AEL* III:140).

“while his *ba*¹⁸ goes to the sky together with the august spirits.”¹⁹ Implicit in such depictions of a postmortem judgment is that one can, through one’s behavior, exert control over one’s future postmortem experience.²⁰

3.2 The Interplay of Death and Possessions in Ancient Egyptian Literature

The close association between death and a postmortem judgment that appears in *I Enoch* and *Testament of Abraham* is also widely attested in ancient Egyptian literature. The link between death and a postmortem judgment was the operative premise for most ancient Egyptian texts and this belief is associated with specific recommendations for the use of possessions. The use of possessions, since it determined to a large degree one’s postmortem judgment, provided one avenue through which people could exert some modicum of control over what was otherwise an uncontrollable event.

3.2.1 Postmortem Judgment and the Misuse of Others’ Possessions

A deed frequently cited as the basis for one’s judgment is the use (or abuse) of possessions. The absence of an improper procurement of goods is linked to an expectation of favorable judgment. The assumption that acquiring goods unjustly would result in divine judgment appears in texts throughout various periods of Egyptian

¹⁸ Ibid. Lichtheim, *AEL*, I:135, defines the *ba* as “that mysterious life-force ... the indwelling demonic power that controlled man’s life, escaped from his body at the moment of death, and played a vital but ill-defined part in his afterlife.”

¹⁹ *AEL* III:140. “He who would be found to have good deeds equal to his misdeeds is taken in among the excellent spirits who serve Sokar-Osiris.”

²⁰ Deeds likewise are the primary criteria of a postmortem judgment scene depicted in *The Instruction to King Merikare*, didactic literature from the transition to the Middle Kingdom (*AEL* I:101-02). In this text the after-life comprises an eternity (*AEL* I:101). Though she grants the possibility that the judgment depicted here is a “vindication of those who were wronged on earth,” Lichtheim prefers to understand it as a “general judgment of the dead” (*AEL*, I:107, n.4.).

history.²¹ An example from the Late Period is the tomb inscription of Petosiris, the son of Sishu. In a speech attributed to the latter, Sishu declares:

I seized no goods from any man,
I did no wrong to anyone,
All citizens praised god for me.
I did this remembering I would reach god after death,
Knowing the day of the Lord of justice,
When they separate in judgment!
One praises god for him who loves god,
He will reach his tomb without grief.”²²

Sishu’s reason for not seizing any goods is his knowledge that such activity would be cause for retaliatory judgment after his death. The operative premise appears to be that those who take possessions from others will, in the judgment, be treated in kind. Those who do not share their goods will be punished. The retributive principle underlying this notion is articulated by the Late Period inscription Setne II in which Si-Osire tells his father Setne: ““He who is beneficent on earth, to him one is beneficent in the netherworld. And he who is evil, to him one is evil. It is so decreed [and will remain so] for ever.”²³

Two important consequences obtain from the correlation between the use of goods and the divine judgment. First, the prominent role of possessions as a primary criterion in the judgment encourages people to be generous with their goods. There is

²¹ For one of the most comprehensive Egyptian depictions of post-mortem judgment, see the Book of the Dead, a New Kingdom text. According to Lichtheim, *AEL* II:119, this text was “designed to bring about the resurrection of the dead person and his safety in the afterlife.” Many “declarations of innocence” made by persons seeking to be in right standing in the judgment include denials that one has not acquired goods unjustly (*AEL* II:125). Many of these same denials concerning the abuse of wealth reappear in the “Declaration to the Forty-two Gods,” another New Kingdom text (*AEL* II:126). Affirmations in the Book of the Dead regarding the proper use of possessions carry an expectation of a favorable divine judgment in the afterlife. *Ma’at* consists of sharing one’s possessions with society’s socially and economically vulnerable members (*AEL* II:128).

²² Inscription No. 116 (*AEL* III:50-51). Emphasis mine.

²³ *AEL* III:141. See also the preceding statement where Si-Osire tells his father that it has been ordered that “what had happened to them on earth should happen to them in the netherworld.”

thus a potential ethical ramification to the frequent depiction of people being judged based on their utilization of possessions. Second, because one is able to make choices regarding how one uses possessions, the function of wealth as a criterion in the judgment also offers hope that one will be able to influence (positively) one's future judgment. The close association of wealth and the divine judgment thus potentially allays fears of what may be perceived as uncontrollable (death and one's post-mortem existence) by placing a central aspect of that existence within the realm of one's control.

3.2.2 Negative Views of the Afterlife and Enjoyment

In some Late Period ancient Egyptian texts, the negative depiction of the after-life functions as a warrant for admonitions to enjoy life and one's possessions. The Stela of Taimhotep, a biographical inscription, enjoins one:

Weary not of drink and food,
Of drinking deep and loving!

Celebrate the holiday,
Follow your heart day and night,
Let not care into your heart,
Value the years spent on earth! (*AEL* III:62)

These exhortations to enjoy life precede, and are rooted in, a dismal assessment of the after-life:

The west, it is a land of sleep,
Darkness weighs on the dwelling-place,
Those who are there sleep in their mummy-forms.

They wake not to see their brothers,
They see not their fathers, their mothers,
Their hearts forgot their wives, their children.

The water of life which has food for all,
It is thirst for me;
It comes to him who is on earth,

I thirst with water beside me! ...²⁴

These negative depictions of death and the after-life, albeit not reflective of all Egyptian views, contribute to a perception of death and the after-life characterized by fear. The emergence of efforts to find ways of controlling other aspects of one's life make sense given the kind of apprehension these dismal views of death and the afterlife might engender.

There are no specific recommendations in ancient Egyptian literature regarding the use of possessions that are linked to a positive portrayal of the afterlife. Egyptian burial practices reflect a belief (or hope) in the ability for one to use and (presumably) enjoy goods in the afterlife. Yet this belief does not seem to translate into concrete recommendations regarding the use of possessions during one's lifetime.

3.2.3 Death's Uncertain Timing and Generosity

The uncertain timing of death serves as a rationale both for enjoying possessions and sharing them generously with others. The Instruction of Ankhsheshonq, a lengthy compilation of gnomic sayings from the Late Period, cites the uncertain timing of death as a warrant for sharing one's goods with others. Shortly after noting that death's uncertain timing is a reason for not delaying the procurement of a tomb (12.5),²⁵ the Instruction recommends using one's goods generously: "Let your benefaction reach him who has need of it" (12.17) and "Do not be stingy; wealth is no security" (12.18).²⁶ Although the link between these three sayings is not explicit, their proximity suggests

²⁴ Thirsting for water that is nearby is a motif present also in the Stela of Isenkhebe (*AEL* III:59).

²⁵ *AEL* III:168. The Instruction of Ankhsheshonq stresses the uncertain timing of death elsewhere: "Do not dwell in a house which is decaying; death does not say 'I am coming'" (20.12) (*AEL* III:175).

²⁶ *AEL* III:169.

that the uncertain timing of death might function as a reason for sharing one's goods with others. Since death might come quickly (and without warning), one should share one's goods generously with whatever little time might remain.

3.2.4 Death's Uncertain Timing and Enjoyment

In *Papyrus Insinger*, death's uncertain timing functions as a warrant to enjoy one's goods. The Sixteenth Instruction of *Papyrus Insinger* contains the following series of sayings in close succession:

Do not let your flesh suffer when you have something in the storehouse (17.4).
The heart cannot rise up when there is affliction in it (17.5).
Death and the life of tomorrow, we do not know their <nature> (17.6).
Today with its livelihood is what the wise man asks for (17.7).
He who loves to hoard wealth will die robbed of it (17.8; *AEL* III:215).

The text proceeds to encourage the enjoyment of wine, food, and women, stressing that such enjoyment will be severely curtailed in old age (defined as sixty years or older) (17.11-15; cf. Qoh 11:9; 12:1-8). The wise person "utilizes possessions," which is preferable both to begging or saving (17.18-20).

The implicit correlation between death's uncertain arrival and using possessions in the Instruction of Ankhsheshonq is made explicit here in *Papyrus Insinger*. Since one knows neither when death approaches nor what tomorrow holds, one ought to enjoy one's goods. The (unspoken) danger is that one might die with hoarded wealth. In such an event death will effectively steal one's wealth since one is incapable (as is claimed in *Papyrus Insinger*) of taking wealth into the afterlife. The only way to prevent this theft of one's goods by death is to give them away before one dies. Since one cannot ensure that

one will survive any given day, hoarding wealth guarantees that it will eventually be stolen (on the eventual day that death arrives).

One can understand the admonition to enjoy one's goods as an attempt to establish control given the uncontrollable nature of death's timing and indiscriminate reach.²⁷ Although one cannot be certain of when or how one will perish, one can control how one uses goods. The focus on exerting control through the use of possessions is noteworthy given the causal link in many Egyptian texts between such a use and one's postmortem treatment by the gods. Death poses a threat to one's sense of control but the (proper) use of goods is a vehicle that can provide one with the most significant kind of control, that over one's eternal destiny.

3.2.5 The Unavoidability and Finality of Death

Egyptian texts frequently cite death's unavoidability and finality as a warrant for using possessions in certain ways. Viewing death as an irreversible event that one could not control resulted in divergent recommendations such as enjoyment, generosity, and acts of justice.

3.2.5.1 Enjoyment

The perception of the finality of death regularly resulted in exhortations to enjoy one's possessions, while one still had the opportunity to do so. The precariousness of

²⁷ Texts from the Middle Kingdom also cite death's uncertain timing as a reason for enjoying one's goods in the present. The Admonitions of Ipuwer, a Middle Kingdom didactic text, exhorts the reader: "Consume your goods in gladness, while there is none to hinder you. It is good for a man to eat his food. God ordains it for him whom he favors" (*AEL* I:157). This charge precedes a lamentation on the frequent and unpredictable occurrence of death: "The land is a weed that kills people. One does not expect to live. All these years there is strife. A man is killed on his roof. He must keep watch in his gatehouse. If he is brave he may save himself. Such is his life!" (*AEL* I:160). The "fear of death" is listed as one of many troubling things (*AEL* I:157).

death, its uncertain timing, and the fear it induces all represent events that lie largely outside the scope of one's control. The recommended response to these unmanageable aspects of death, as in Qoheleth, is to enjoy that which one can control. This emphasis is not a new trend during the Late Period, and is attested in Middle Kingdom texts.²⁸

The biographical inscription on the statue of Nebneteru, from the Late Period, admonishes enjoying life given the reality (and apparent finality) of death. The account of spending a "lifetime in heart's delight" is couched within remarks about the "dark vale" of death. In light of death, it is "not foolish to do the heart's wish." The author legitimates his advice on "following [one's] heart (*šms-ib*)" by describing this as an activity that Amun blesses (*AEI* III:21-22).²⁹ The author's own personal experience of death functions as a warrant for admonishing others to enjoy life and their goods (*AEI* III:24).

Some texts concretely illustrated an aspect of death's finality by insisting that one cannot bring possessions beyond death. The inability to "take things with you" was cited as a reason for enjoying one's goods before death eliminated such an opportunity. An inscription on the Late Period tomb of Petosiris³⁰ admonishes drinking "till drunk,"

²⁸ The Admonitions of Ipuwer, didactic literature from the Middle Kingdom, frames admonitions to enjoy one's food and goods within the reality of death (*AEI* I:157). Such enjoyment is said to be ordained by God "for him whom he favors." The *Dispute Between a Man and his Ba*, another example of Middle Kingdom didactic literature, enjoins enjoyment in the face of death: If you think of burial, it is heartbreak. It is the gift of tears by aggrieving a man. It is taking a man from his house, casting (him) on high ground. You will not go up to see the sun. . . . Follow the feast day, forget worry! (*AEI* I:165). Lichtheim, *AEI*, I:195, notes that the *ba*, "though itself the guarantor of immortality, is given the role of denigrating death and immortality, denying the worth of tombs, and counseling enjoyment of life." This exhortation to follow the feast day and forget worry occurs within a series of six stanzas, each of which begins with the phrase "Death is before me today" (*AEI* I:168). Enjoyment is understood in the *Dispute* as the suitable response to the ubiquitous reality and potential imminence of death.

²⁹ Lichtheim, *AEI* III:24, fn. 16, notes that *šms-ib* "is to make the best and fullest use of what life holds; it is being active, generous, and joyful. Beneath the exhortation to enjoy life lay the continuous conflict between valuing life in all its transitoriness and the vision of an eternal afterlife, a vision that oscillated between hope and doubt."

³⁰ Inscription No. 127.

enjoying the feast day, and following one's heart "in the moment on earth." One is to do such things since:

As man departs his goods depart,
He who inherits them does his wish in turn.³¹

The inscription also depicts death as an inevitable event whose timing cannot be predicted (*AEL* III:51-52).³² Enjoyment is offered as the optimal use of goods given this complete lack of certainty regarding death's unpredictable timing. Such texts reflect an attempt to seize upon some aspect of control given the utter lack of control associated with death. This emphasis on enjoyment as a meaningful response to the uncontrollable aspects of death is attested in several texts preceding the Late Period.³³

3.2.5.2 Generosity and Enjoyment

A focus on the finality of death could also result in advice to be generous and enjoy one's goods.³⁴ These patently disparate views were not mutually exclusive, as is

³¹ Lichtheim identifies the various motifs expressed in this inscription (including the advice to enjoy both life and one's goods and the inability to take goods into the afterlife) as "representative of Egyptian religious thinking in its final phase."

³² Lichtheim, *AEL*, III:52, n. 1: "It is worth mentioning that the urge to enjoy life was an integral part of this piety. It was only when the "make merry" motif was coupled with doubts about the reality of the afterlife, as in the Middle Kingdom *Harper's Song from the Tomb of King Intef*, that it became impious."

³³ The Middle Kingdom *Song from the Tomb of King Intef* cites the inability to take goods into the afterlife, and the impossibility of returning from the afterlife, as reasons for enjoying possessions (*AEL* I:196-97). On the uncertain timing of death, see the Admonitions of Ipuwer, a Middle Kingdom text (*AEL* I:160).

³⁴ On the compatibility between enjoyment, generosity, and acts of justice, see the Instruction of King Amenemhet I (*AEL* I:136-38) and the Eloquent Peasant (*AEL* I:172-79). Advice to enjoy goods and use them generously occur in Old Kingdom texts. The Old Kingdom Instruction of Ptahhotep advises generosity and moderate enjoyment as ideal ways to utilize possessions. On the one hand, readers are told to follow their heart as long as they live. On the other hand, the extent of such enjoyment is limited. One whose "heart obeys his belly" chooses self-contempt over love, and "belongs to the enemy" (14; *AEL* I:67). The Instruction thereby qualifies its previous admonitions by clarifying that enjoyment is acceptable but avarice is *verboden*. Lichtheim, 78, n. 29, defines belly as the "seat of unreasoning feelings, desires, and appetites." Elsewhere, she notes that belly and heart can be used interchangeably. The Instruction offers an extended warning against the "vice of greed," which it calls a "grievous sickness without cure" and a "compound of all evils" (19; *AEL* I:68-69). Note the parallel between the description of greed as a

evident in the Instruction of Ankhsheshonq which commends both as appropriate responses to the reality and unavailability of death:

“Do well by your body in your days of well-being” (8.7).

“There is no one who does not die” (8.8).

“In strait times or happy times wealth grows because of spreading it” (8.13).

“May your fate not be the fate of one who begs and is given” (8.14; *AEL* III:166).

The Sarcophagus-Lid Inscription of Wennofer, also from the Late Period, recommends both enjoyment and acts of justice and deeds of generosity on behalf of the needy. The “lover of drink and lord of the feast day” is also a “shelter for the needy” and one who welcomes the stranger (*AEL* III:55-57).

3.2.6 Remembering the Dead as a Means of Finding Control

If one could not control the vagaries associated with one’s death, one could at least seek to influence how one was remembered after death. Egyptian literature evinces an obsession with finding ways to maintain one’s memory among the living. The premise underlying such attempts conflicts with Qoheleth who insisted that one would (and could) not be remembered after death.³⁵ In contrast to Qoheleth but in line with Ben Sira and *I Enoch*,³⁶ Egyptian literature imagines that a person can be remembered long after death.³⁷

“compound of all evils” and the similar sayings in Jewish, Greco-Roman, and early Christian texts. The Instruction highlights the relational destruction that greed wreaks among families (19-20). Readers are accordingly warned against coveting more than what is necessary for life (20). Possessions are not to be hoarded but shared with family and friends (21-22; *AEL* I:69). Reasons cited for sharing include the status of goods as divine gifts (9, 10, 30; *AEL* I:71). See the Instruction of Ptahhotep 9, 10, for other examples of wealth as a divine gift.

³⁵ See, e.g., Qoh 1:11; 2:16; 9:5.

³⁶ Sir 37:26; 38:34b; 41:11-13; 44:10, 14; *I En.* 103:4b.

³⁷ An exception to this is the Song from the Tomb of King Intef (transition to the Middle Kingdom) which is skeptical of the potential to be remembered after death (*AEL* I:196-97). The Song also voices skepticism regarding the nature of the afterlife, and the inability to take goods beyond death (*AEL* I:196-97). Like Qoheleth, these perspectives result in recommendations that one enjoy one’s goods. The skepticism of the Song is rejected in the New Kingdom Harper’s Song from the Tomb of Neferhotep (*AEL*

As Papyrus Insinger notes, one's life is renewed through leaving one's name behind on earth (2:13; *AEL* III:187). "A man is revived when his name is pronounced," claims the biographical inscription of Petosiris (No. 81; *AEL* III:46).³⁸

Yet, as in Ben Sira (44:8-9a; cf. 10:17a), not everyone was remembered after one died. To be remembered, one had to act in certain ways to ensure that one's memory would persist among the living. Chief among the vehicles cited in Egyptian texts by which one could be remembered are building monuments, bearing children, becoming a scribe, and performing acts of generosity.³⁹

Erecting monuments allowed one's memory to be preserved in physical structures. Inscriptions (in the Middle Kingdom, New Kingdom, and Late Period) attest to the hope that these structures will serve as vehicles of postmortem remembrance.⁴⁰

Warnings on a Late Period inscription not to remove statues likely reflect the concern that doing so may eliminate one's memory in the minds of others.⁴¹

II: 115-16). This latter song speaks of the praises of the dead as a "remembrance for posterity," and explicitly repudiates the exhortation to enjoy life in Intef (*AEL* II:115-16).

³⁸ As in Ben Sira, one's "name" can live on after one dies (*The Dispute Between a Man and his Ba*, an example of Middle Kingdom didactic literature, notes: "Though you are dead, your name lives" (*AEL* I:165). A dead person could be remembered, for example, if their name was uttered by others.

³⁹ "The Immortality of Writers," from the New Kingdom, rejects the construction of monuments, and the bearing of children, as vehicles by which one would be remembered after death. The text argues that becoming a scribe and leaving written words for posterity would result in being remembered after death. The names of scribes "have become everlasting," even though they have died and all their kin are forgotten. The ability to predict the future accurately is cited as one reason that scribes were remembered (II:177). The papyrus asserts that writings are a more reliable vehicle of remembrance than tombs, stelae, or children (*AEL* II:176). The polemical nature of this papyrus reflects a debate regarding which vehicles of remembrance were most secure.

⁴⁰ See the statue of Montemhet (*AEL* III:30-31); tomb of Petosiris (*AEL* I:117.); the poetical Stela of Thutmose III (*AEL* II:38); the Stelae of Amenhotep IV Akhenaten (*AEL* II:49). The Stela of Amenhotep III expresses hope that a monument will last for eternity (*AEL* II:44-47).

⁴¹ See, e.g., the Late Period statue inscription of Nebneteru (*AEL* III:22). The Instruction to King Merikare, during the transition from the Old to Middle Kingdom, admonishes one to "endow your monuments according to your wealth" since "even one day gives to eternity, an hour contributes to the future" (*AEL* I:102).

3.2.6.1 Remembrance Through Generosity and Acts of Justice

Another option for ensuring one's remembrance among others is generosity. Acts of justice, or generosity with the socially and economically vulnerable, were understood as a means of being remembered. A Late Period inscription notes that Harwa was

A refuge for the wretched,
A float for the drowning,
A ladder for him who is in the abyss.
One who speaks for the unhappy,
Who assists the unfortunate (*snf nb-sp*),
Who helps the oppressed by his good deed (*AEL III:26*).

He also claims to be one

Who gave bread to the hungry, clothes to the naked,
Removed pain, suppressed wrongdoing;
Who buried the revered ones, supported the old,
Removed the want of the have-not.
A shade for the child,
A helper for the widow,
One who gave rank to an infant (*AEL III:27*).

Harwa acknowledges the causal relationship between these deeds of mercy and his memory among the living after his death:

I did these things knowing their weight,
And their reward from the Lord of Things:
To abide in men's mouth without ever ending,
To be well remembered in after years (*AEL III:27*).⁴²

He reiterates this connection between his care for the "least of these" and being remembered after he dies:

I entered the Presence to resolve difficulties,
To assist the unfortunate.
I have given goods to the have-not,
I endowed the orphan in my town.
My reward is being remembered for my beneficence,
My ka enduring because of my kindness – Harwa (*AEL III:27-28*).⁴³

⁴² Emphasis mine.

⁴³ Emphasis mine.

The statue inscription of Udjahorresne, another Late Period biographical inscription, also establishes a causal relationship between deeds of generosity and postmortem remembrance. After citing his beneficent work on behalf of the weak and timid, a plea is offered that the gods will make the name of Udjahorresne “endure in this land forever!” (*AEL* III:39-40).

The views reflected in these inscriptions demonstrate the important causal relationship between one’s respective views of death and possessions. Whereas Qoheleth recommends enjoyment because one would not be remembered after death (Qoh 8:10, 15; 9:5-10), these texts enjoin generosity precisely because of its potential function as a vehicle of postmortem remembrance.⁴⁴

The myriad efforts to guarantee one’s postmortem remembrance can be understood as an attempt to secure some modicum of control given the uncontrollable nature of death. The multiple and conflicting perspectives in wisdom literature regarding the use of possessions are endeavors, I contend, to seize control over some aspect of life. Since many of these aspects of life bear directly upon one’s death and afterlife they can also be understood as efforts to secure control over aspects of death itself. Though these views differ in terms of their specific response to death and subsequent recommendation, they share in common an effort to respond to the uncontrollable nature of death by

⁴⁴ Such views are also attested in the Old Kingdom, transition to the Middle Kingdom, Middle Kingdom, and New Kingdom. For an example from the Old Kingdom, see the Instruction of Ptahhotep (34; *AEL* I:72). The Instruction to King Merikare, from the transition to the Middle Kingdom, argues that performing acts of justice prolongs one’s memory after death (*AEL* I:100, 106-07). The king is told that his kindness will function as a lasting memorial (*AEL* I:99). Justice is clarified as calming the weeper, not oppressing the widow, not expelling a man from his father’s property, and not reducing the nobles in their possessions. The eighth petition of “The Eloquent Peasant,” Middle Kingdom didactic literature, establishes a causal relationship between justice and the perpetuity of memory (*AEL* I:181). An inscription of Seti I (from the New Kingdom) evinces a hope that his construction of a well to provide water for travelers will result in his name being perpetuated forever (*AEL* II:53-54). Hope is also expressed that his name will be remembered through his physical monuments.

seizing upon a controllable behavior that has some relationship to, and bearing upon, death.

3.2.3 Conclusion

Much of the obsession with death in ancient Egyptian literature was concerned with those aspects of death that posed a threat to one's sense of control. Multiple options existed by which one could seek to exert some control given these uncontrollable facets of death. The following chart illustrates various options from the Late Period for how perceptions of death related to recommendations regarding possessions.

<u>Death</u>	<u>Examples</u>	<u>View/Role of God</u>	<u>Possessions</u>
Negative view of afterlife	Stela of Taimhotep		Enjoyment (2:24a)
Postmortem Judgment	Petosiris		Critique misuse of others' goods
Postmortem Judgment	Si-Osire		Generosity
Uncertain Timing of Death	Pap. Insinger		Enjoyment
Uncertain timing of Death	Instruction of Ankhsheshonq		Enjoyment and Generosity
Inevitability and finality of death	Nebneteru	Activity blessed by Amun	Enjoyment
Can't Take Goods with you	Petosiris	God bestows riches on their owner	Enjoyment
Unavoidability of death	Instruction of Ankhsheshonq		Enjoyment and Generosity
Remembrance after death	Petosiris		Erecting monuments
Remembrance after death	Udjahorresne		Generosity
Remembrance after death	Harwa		Acts of Justice (feed hungry, clothe naked, help widow, orphan)

The chart highlights the complex nature of the conversation on death and possessions. On the one hand, proposals for the use of possessions are rooted in specific understandings of death. On the other hand, the same perception of death could result in disparate recommendations for possessions. A belief in the ability to be remembered after death elicited diverse ways of using possessions to secure one's memory among the living. It is also the case that the same recommendation for how one should use possessions could result from different, even contradictory, attitudes toward death. Enjoyment is recommended in Qoheleth and many Egyptian texts even though the former does not adopt the view, common in the latter, of a postmortem judgment. In the following chapter, I turn to investigate the intersection of death and possessions in two Greco-Roman authors.

4. The Interplay of Death and Possessions in Lucian and Seneca

4.1 Introduction

There is ample Greco-Roman material on the separate motifs of death and possessions.¹ Compared to Hellenistic Jewish and ancient Egyptian literature, however, Greco-Roman texts display scant interest in the intersection of these two motifs. Texts that focus explicitly on possessions often have negligible treatment of death. Plutarch's *De Cupiditate*, for example, rarely mentions death.² Similarly, although several Greco-Roman authors excoriate greed,³ and identify avarice (πλεονεξία / *avaritia*) or the love of money (φιλαργυρία) as the source of all evil,⁴ such critique is usually neither informed by nor framed within a discussion of death. This relative lack of attention to the intersection of death and possessions shows that it was possible to discuss possessions without reference to death. So also was it possible to explore death without referring to

¹ Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 3, identifies the “fear of death” as an issue that was a focus of Hellenistic philosophical schools. For Greco-Roman attitudes toward death, see Richmond Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs* (Illinois Studies in Language and Literature 28; Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1942); Donna C. Kurtz and John Broadman, *Greek Burial Customs* (Aspects of Greek and Roman Life; London: Thames & Hudson, 1971); Robert Garland, *The Greek Way of Death* (London: Duckworth, 1985); Elizabeth A. Meyer, “Explaining the Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire: The Evidence of Epitaphs,” *JRS* 80 (1990): 74-96; Gabriel Sanders, *Lapides memores: Païens et chrétiens face à la mort: le témoignage de l'épigraphie funéraire latine* (ed. Angela Donati, Dorothy Pikhuis and Marc van Uytvanghe; Epigrafia e antichità 11; Faenza: Fratelli Lega, 1991); Jan Maarten Bremer, “Death and Immortality in Some Greek Poems,” in *Hidden Futures: Death and Immortality in Ancient Egypt, Anatolia, the Classical, Biblical and Arabic-Islamic World* (ed. Jan Maarten Bremer, Theo P.J. van den Hout; Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1994): 109-24; idem, “The Soul, Death, and the Afterlife in Early and Classical Greece,” in *Hidden Futures*, 91-106; Bartel Poortman, “Death and Immortality in Greek Philosophy: From the Presocratics to the Hellenistic Era,” in *Hidden Futures*, 197-220; Sarah Iles Johnston, *Restless Dead: Encounters between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

² Plutarch refers to death twice (*Cupid. divit.* 7), and neither reference bears directly upon his critique of avarice or his recommendations regarding the use of possessions.

³ Virgil, *Aen.* III.56; cf. Propertius, *Elegiae* III. 13. 48; Horace, *Sat.* II.3.94; Ovid, *Metam.* I.128-131.

⁴ Diogenes, *Ep.* 50, 22-23; Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 21.1.4a; Dio Chrysostom, *Avar.* 17.6; Apollodorus Comicus, *Philadelph. Frag.* 4; *Ceb. Tab.* 19.5; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 6.50; De Gnomologio Vaticano inedito 265; Claudianus, *De Laudibus Stilichonis* II. 3; Stobaeus, *Ecl.* III 417, 5 H; cf. Plato, *Leg.* 9.870 a, c; Hippocrates, *Ep.* 17, 43. For an early Christian parallel, see Polycarp, *Ep. Ph.* II.4.1; cf. Ambrose, *Ep.* 15; idem, *Duties of the Clergy* 2.17.89.

possessions. The interplay of death and possessions, in other words, was a possible conversation but not a necessary or required one.

In Greco-Roman literature, the intersection of death and possessions most frequently occurs in moral discourse. I will focus on two authors, Lucian and Seneca. Although I refer to Lucian's perspectives on death and possessions in all of his works, I give primary attention to *Dialogues of the Dead*, his most extensive treatment of the intersection of these two motifs. My analysis of Seneca focuses upon the *Epistulae Morales*. I do not consider the works of Lucian and Seneca to be examples of "wisdom literature," but they do exhibit sapiential features. I include their works because of such sapiential features and, more importantly, because of the prominent attention they each give to death and possessions. I will show that including Lucian and Seneca substantially enriches the conversation regarding death and possessions.

4.2 Lucian and the *Dialogues of the Dead*

Lucian of Samosata was one of several Greco-Roman satirists in the Hellenistic period. Although his lifespan (c. 120 - c. 180) postdates the composition of Luke-Acts, his writings exhibit a number of salient parallels with the New Testament in general, and with Luke in particular.⁵ The satirical nature of Lucian's works is noteworthy given the similar literary function that some see between the genres of satire and parable.⁶ Lucian's

⁵ See Hans Dieter Betz, *Lukian von Samosata und das Neue Testament: Religionsgeschichtliche und paränetische Parallelen* (Ein Beitrag zum Corpus Hellenisticum Novi Testamenti; TUGAL 76; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1961).

⁶ Sheldon Sacks, *Fiction and the Shape of Belief* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 7, 24-26, proposes the following literary continuum: myth / apologue / action / satire / parable. Commenting on this scale, John R. May, "Visual Story and the Religious Interpretation of Film," in *Religion in Film* (ed. John R. May and Michael Bird; Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), claims that myth "establishes world ... parable subverts it, apologue defends world, action investigates or describes it, and satire attacks it." May is influenced here by the work on parables by John Dominic

Dialogues of the Dead provides an extended satire of attitudes toward death and possessions. Because death is the backdrop of each dialogue, all statements on possessions and wealth are framed within this context of the end of one's life and the transition to an afterlife. My analysis will also make use of Lucian's other works which contain perspectives on death and possessions.⁷ Before analyzing the relationship between death and possessions in the *Dialogues*, I will briefly survey the depiction of death in the *Dialogues*.

4.2.1 The Unavoidability, Irreversibility, and Universal Fear of Death

Death functions in Lucian's *Dialogues* as a revelatory judgment, a moment that lays bare one's life and deeds for others to see.⁸ Menippus describes the experience awaiting all who have died: "We must be judged (δικασθῆναι δεήσει), and they say the judgments are oppressive, wheels and stones and vultures; and the life (βίος) of each person will be revealed (δειχθήσεταί)" (*Dial. mort.* 20.13).⁹ In this manner, the

Crossan, *The Dark Interval: Towards a Theology of Story* (Niles, Ill.: Argus Communications, 1975), 53. Niall Rudd, *Themes in Roman Satire* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1986), 1ff, identifies attack, entertainment and preaching as the three elements of satire.

⁷ My analysis excludes works whose Lucianic authorship is considered spurious (e.g., *Lucius, Amores*). On the disputed nature of Lucian's works, see M. D. Macleod, *Lucian*. Vol. 8 (LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), ix-x, 1-2, 47-51, 147-48, 237, 303-05, 319-23, 379, 413-14, 469, 505-07, 523.

⁸ Death functions as an extensive judgment in Lucian's *Cataplus* (*Cat.* 13, 23-29). The judgment is akin to a judicial proceeding, complete with a court (δικαστήριον), a sentence (δίκη), accusation (κατηγόρεω), accusers (κατήγορος), witnesses (μάρτυς), and testifying (μαρτυρέω, καταμαρτυρέω). Lucian employs the analogy of a courtroom to describe the afterlife in *Menippus* (11-14) and *Zeus Catechized* (17-18). In the latter, Zeus insists that the afterlife consists of punishments and rewards (κολάσεις καὶ τιμᾶς), and that each person's life is scrutinized (ἐξετάζω) in a court (δικαστήριον) (*Jupp. conf.* 18). The good, pious, and those who have lived virtuously join the heroes in the Elysian fields (*Jupp. conf.* 17-18; *Luct.* 7). Lucian elsewhere notes that the common belief is that most people are neither punished nor rewarded, but instead wander through Hades (*Luct.* 8).

⁹ Emphasis mine. Translations of *Dialogues of the Dead* are my own. For the Greek text, see Lucian, *Dialogi mortuorum* (M.D. MacLeod, trans and ed.; LCL; vol 7; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961). References follow the order in LCL. In *Menippus*, punishments include flogging, roasting on fire, stretching on the rack, pillories, and wheels of torture (*Men.* 14). Some are devoured by vultures (*Luct.* 8).

Dialogues illustrate Ben Sira’s maxim that “revelation of deeds occurs at the end” of a person’s life (Sir 11:27b; cf. 11:26).¹⁰ As in Ben Sira, one should not be judged blessed (εὐδαίμων), until death and the end of one’s life (*Char.* 10-11). Like *I Enoch* and *Testament of Abraham*, however, the *Dialogues* explicitly situate this judgment experience in an afterlife. My purpose is not to discuss whether Lucian personally believes in his portrayals of the afterlife,¹¹ but to assess how such depictions function rhetorically in his arguments regarding the meaningful use of possessions.

Death and the postmortem experience elicit fear from many of the characters in the *Dialogues*. Such is the case with the philosopher to whom Hermes pointedly asks: “Playing the coward with death (πρὸς θάνατον ἀποδειλιᾶς)” (*Dial. mort.* 20.9)?¹² Some people enter death “weeping, and some begging to be set free. And some coming down with pain” (*Dial. mort.* 22.1). The reluctance to enter death is evident in their resistance (ἀντιβρίνω), lying on their backs, and setting themselves firmly against

¹⁰ In *Cataplus*, people are prosecuted for the wicked things (πονηρά) they commit during their life (23). Every wicked deed committed in life leaves “an invisible mark on the soul (ἀφάνη στίγματα ἐπὶ ψυχῆς)” (24). In *Menippus*, Minos examines and punishes people in proportion to their crimes, and sends them to the place of the wicked (ἀσεβῶν) (*Men.* 12). All types of people are punished: kings, slaves, satraps, poor (πένητες), rich (πλούσιοι), and beggars (πτῶχοι) (*Men.* 14). However, the rich are punished twice as much as the poor, and the latter are allowed to rest between punishments. The ones punished most severely are those prideful in their wealth and offices (*Men.* 12). The rich likely receive a greater punishment since they commit many unlawful deeds (παράνομα), including plundering, oppressing, and despising the poor (*Men.* 20; cf. *Sat.* 10, 12). On account of this, those in Hades pass a resolution condemning the souls of the rich to enter and remain in donkeys for 250,000 years, after which they will be allowed to die (*Men.* 20). Lucian elsewhere depicts the afterlife as a time when the wicked are punished, and the good (χρήστος) abide in good fortune (εὐδαιμονία) (*Jupp. conf.* 17; *Luct.* 7-9). The latter text also refers to the postmortem punishments associated with Tityus and Tantalus (cf. *Bis. acc.* 21; *Sacr.* 9; *Men.* 14; cf. *Philops.* 25; *Luct.* 8).

¹¹ In *De luctu*, Lucian notes that the mass of people (πολὺς ὄμιλος) and the common people (ἰδιώτας) hold beliefs such as the existence and nature of Hades, the punishment of the wicked, and reward for the good and just (*Luct.* 2-9). In *Zeus Rants*, Damis and Timocles debate whether the gods punish people during their lifetimes (*Jupp. trag.* 36-37). Damis later argues that the twin failure of the good to be rewarded, and the wicked to be punished, is evidence that the gods do not exercise providence (*Jupp. trag.* 48-49).

¹² Hermes does not give the philosopher an opportunity to answer, telling him to enter quickly (*Dial. mort.* 20.9).

(ἀντερείδω) Hermes who must push them in by their heads (*Dial. mort.* 22.1).¹³ Diogenes notes that everyone except children and infants weeps (δακρύω) and wails aloud (οἰμώζω) as they anticipate entering the afterlife (*Dial. mort.* 22:6).¹⁴ The reluctance to enter the afterlife is reflected in Menippus’s query to the philosopher, “So why are you still hesitating (μέλλω)?” (*Dial. mort.* 20 .13). Even Socrates, although “seeming not to fear (δείδω) death at all,” changed his tone once he faced death, and “shrieked (κωκύω) like newborn babes, and cried for his children and became all out of sorts” (*Dial. mort.* 4.1).¹⁵ The tacit assumption is that if the noble Socrates succumbed to the fear of death, then there is little hope that anyone else will fare differently. Socrates’ experience is presented as emblematic of “everyone: until the entrance, they are bold and courageous, but the precise testing (ἐλεγχος ἀκριβής) are the things inside” (*Dial. mort.* 4.2). The reluctance to enter death that characterized Abraham in *T. Ab.* is depicted in the *Dialogues* as a nearly universal trait.¹⁶ As we will see below, Lucian envisions a proportional relationship between one’s amount of possessions and one’s fear of death.

Even characters that one might not expect to fear death do so. Diogenes is surprised to learn that an elderly man who weeps (δακρύω) upon entering death was not

¹³ Lucian depicts a similar scene, using a same verb, in *Cataplus*. When taken to death, the tyrant “was straining and holding back the entire way, and because he set his feet firmly against (ἀντερείδω) the ground, he was by no means easily led” (4). The tyrant also seeks to escape death by begging, entreating, asking to be released for a short while, and promising a bribe (4).

¹⁴ On the universal wailing (οἰμώζω) expressed by those entering Hades, see Lucian, *Char.* 1, 8.

¹⁵ Cerberus remarks that since Socrates “could see [death] was inescapable (ἀναγκάϊον), he put on a bold front, pretending he would be glad to accept what was quite inevitable (ἔδει παθεῖν), all to win the admiration of the onlookers” (*Dial. mort.* 4.2).

¹⁶ This universal fear of death and attempt to avoid its fate is also a common experience in Lucian’s other depictions of postmortem scenes (*Cat.* 3, 4, 8-10, 13-14). For a rare instance in which one seeks to die before one’s time, see *Cat.* 7. Another exception to this general rule are the Christians, most of whom despise (καταφρονέω) death and are willing to face it due to their belief that they will be immortal (ἄθάνατος) and live forever (*Pereg.* 13; cf. 23, 33).

rich (πλουτέω) but a beggar (πτώχος) (*Dial. mort.* 22.9).¹⁷ He was not only poor but also childless, lame, and could scarcely see (*Dial. mort.* 22.9). Even such a person as this was reluctant to enter death: “Yes, for the light was sweet, and death was fearful and to be avoided (τὸ τεθνάναι δεινὸν καὶ φευκτέον)” (*Dial. mort.* 22.9). Diogenes chastises the old man for “acting like a boy in the face of that which must be (πρὸς τὸ χρεῶν),” noting that the man’s old age should have led him to pursue death (*Dial. mort.* 22.9).¹⁸ People who fear death, or mourn over those who have died, fail to recognize the benefits that death brings.¹⁹

The *Dialogues* depict death as inescapable (ἀναγκάϊον) and inevitable (ἔδει παθεῖν) (*Dial. mort.* 4.2).²⁰ In the words of Antilochus:

For these things were decreed by nature: certainly everyone dies; one must therefore abide by her law, and not be distressed with her instructions.

ταῦτα γὰρ ἔδοξε τῇ φύσει, πάντως ἀποθνήσκειν ἅπαντας, ὥστε χρὴ ἐμμένειν τῷ νόμῳ καὶ μὴ ἀνιάσθαι τοῖς διατεταγμένοις (*Dial. mort.* 26.3).²¹

One is, in particular, unable to extend one’s lifespan. In Lucian’s *Cataplus*, a tyrant is called “vain (μάταιος)” for thinking he could live longer (ἐπιβιόω), “when the thread

¹⁷ The man’s name is listed as “Beggar” (πτώχος). The term πτώχος originally referred to someone who “crouches or cringes.” As a substantive it refers to a “beggar” and it later came to mean “poor” (Liddell-Scott, 1550).

¹⁸ As a reason, Diogenes cites the ability of death to remove the evils of old age (*Dial. mort.* 22.9).

¹⁹ Death is preferable since the absence of a need (thirst, hunger, warmth) is better than having such a need met (*Luct.* 16-17). People are thus mistaken to consider death “the greatest of evils” (*Luct.* 24).

²⁰ Lucian elsewhere makes reference to the inevitability of death. No one, claims the philosopher Demonax, is unacquainted with mourning (πένθος) someone who has died (*Demon.* 25). Lucian notes that the line from Homer that Demonax most frequently quoted was: “Idler or toiler, ‘tis all one to Death (κάτθαν’)” (*Demon.* 60; cf. *Il.* 9.320). People die at different ages, but all must perish (*Char.* 19). An “infinite number of roads” lead to the god Death (*Tox.* 38).

²¹ Antilochus is responding to Achilles’s disappointment with the equality in Hades and his desire to return to earth as a living thrall.

assigned to him had already expired” (*Cat.* 3).²² Delaying death is, in short, “impossible (ἀδύνατος)” (*Cat.* 4).²³

The unavoidability of death is illustrated not only through the deaths of many but also the deaths of semi-divine figures such as Heracles (*Dial. mort.* 11) and Alexander (*Dial. mort.* 12). The surprise Diogenes expresses at seeing Heracles in Hades illustrates the point:

“Is not this one Heracles? It is not another, by Heracles! The bow, the club, the lionskin, the stature; it is all Heracles! *Has he died, then, even though he is a son of Zeus?* Tell me, glorious victor, are you dead (νεκρός)? For above on earth, I used to sacrifice to you as [though you were] a god” (*Dial. mort.* 11.1).²⁴

Diogenes is likewise shocked to encounter Alexander in Hades: “What is this, Alexander? *Have you also died (τέθνηκας), just like all of us?*” (*Dial. mort.* 13.1).²⁵ The deaths of Heracles and Alexander reinforce its inevitable and unavoidable nature. Hades is also depicted as inescapable. Once one arrives there, it is impossible to depart (*Dial. mort.* 7.2; 8.2; *Cat.* 4, 8). Diogenes disabuses Alexander of any hope that he may escape from Hades: “For it is not lawful for anyone who has once sailed across the lake and passed into the inside of the entrance to go home again (ἀνέρχομαι)” (*Dial. mort.* 13.3).²⁶

²² Lucian elsewhere uses “thread” (νήμα) to refer to the lifespan apportioned to a person (*Cat.* 7; *Philops.* 25). The term λίνον (“thread”) appears to be interchangeable for Lucian (cf. *Jupp. conf.* 2, 7).

²³ This despite the many attempts of the tyrant to escape Hades and return to earth (*Cat.* 8-14).

²⁴ Emphasis mine.

²⁵ Emphasis mine. When Philip encounters Alexander in Hades he remarks: “For now that you’re dead, don’t you think that there are many who wax witty about that pretence of yours, now that they see the corpse of the ‘god’ lying at full length, clammy and swollen like any other body?” (*Dial. mort.* 12.5).

²⁶ One exception to this rule occurs. Despite telling Protesilaus that he cannot return to earth (“That’s a love that’s common to all the dead, but will come to pass for none of them”), Pluto eventually relents, giving him “one day” to return to be with his love (*Dial. mort.* 28.1-3).

4.2.2 Death as a Reassessment of Possessions

As with some ancient Egyptian texts,²⁷ the *Dialogues* consistently refer to the impossibility of bringing one's possessions across death's divide.²⁸ The inability to take goods into the afterlife has direct consequences upon the nature of the afterlife experience, and also influences the attitudes in the *Dialogues* toward possessions.

The lengthiest of the dialogues describes in great detail what people must leave behind after death. In his first instruction to those who have died, Charon tells them that before crossing the river it "is necessary to proceed naked (γυμνούς ἐπιβαίνειν χρεή), leaving behind all these useless things" (*Dial. mort.* 20.1). Such stripping is mandatory preparation for the afterlife. Its importance is further indicated when Charon insists that Hermes not take anyone across the river who is not "bare" (ψιλός) or who has not "thrown off" (ἀποβάλλω) their things. Charon repeats his insistence, this time to Hermes, that he make everyone "proceed naked (γυμνούς ἐπιβαίνειν)."²⁹ What precisely is to be stripped off is not entirely clear. What is clear is the evaluation of the things that are stripped off. They are all deemed "useless" (περισσός) (*Dial. mort.* 20.1). Many of the remaining dialogues not only clarify the specific content of what must be stripped of, but also illustrate the "useless" nature of the things that people cherish.

The inability to bring goods into the afterlife eliminates virtually every distinction among people in their postmortem existence, contributing to a state of equality among the

²⁷ See, e.g., the inscription of Petosiris and the Song from the tomb of King Intef.

²⁸ The inability to take one's goods into the afterlife is also a motif in Lucian's other works (*Cat.* 8; *Char.* 14, 20). In Clotho's words, the time of ownership (κτησις) expires (ἐξήκω) at death (*Cat.* 8).

²⁹ The titular character of Lucian's *Charon* also refers to people being naked prior to the voyage on his boat (*Char.* 14). In *Menippus*, those in Hades must also strip naked (*Men.* 12).

inhabitants of the afterlife.³⁰ The commitment to an afterlife *sans* distinctions prevents individuals from bringing anything with them that might distinguish themselves as superior to others. Charmoleos, for example, must leave his beauty, lips, kisses, thick hair, the redness of his cheeks, and all his skin (*Dial. mort.* 20.3). The tyrant Lampichus³¹ is forced to leave his purple robe, diadem, and his wealth (ὁ πλοῦτος)” (*Dial. mort.* 20.4).³² Hermes’ refusal to grant Lampichus’s subsequent request to keep his diadem and mantle underscore the inability to bring into the afterlife those things that mark someone as superior to others.³³ After the athlete Damasias asks to be let in since he is naked, Hermes tells him that he must also strip off all his flesh (σάρξ), and throw away (ἀπορρίπτω)³⁴ his wreaths and proclamations (*Dial. mort.* 20.5). Hermes tells a philosopher to discard his “falsehood too, and conceit, and *the opinion that you are better* (ἀμείνων) *than others*” (*Dial. mort.* 20.8).³⁵ The postmortem erasure of distinctions cannot allow for the kind of superiority Hermes perceives in the philosopher.³⁶

People are thus forced to discard items that not only distinguish them from others, but which also, to a significant degree, define their identity. A rhetorician must discard his “endless talking, antitheses, balanced clauses, well rounded sentences, barbarisms, and the other burdens of words” (*Dial. mort.* 20.10). A general wishes to bring armor and

³⁰ In *Dialogues of the Dead*, all persons arrive at the same postmortem destination. In *Cataplus*, Hades is the destination for almost everyone, but at least one person goes to the Isles of the Blessed, where “the good” (ἄριστος) live (*Cat.* 24; *Jupp. conf.* 17). People are forbidden to enter heaven (ὁ οὐρανός) (*Sacr.* 9).

³¹ When he asks if a tyrant should come naked, Hermes replies, “A tyrant shouldn’t, but a dead man (νεκρόν) most certainly should. So off with it all” (*Dial. mort.* 20.4).

³² Hermes tells him he must also do away with his vanity (τῦφον) and pride (ὑπεροψίαν) (*Dial. mort.* 20.4).

³³ When Lampichus thinks he has discarded everything, Hermes tells him that his “cruelty (ὠμότητα), folly (ἄνοιαν), insolence (ὑβρις), and temper (ὀργήν)” remain. “Away with these too,” Hermes instructs (*Dial. mort.* 20.4). Lampichus finally declares that he is stripped (ψιλός).

³⁴ This verb can also mean “disown” or “renounce.”

³⁵ Emphasis mine.

³⁶ The tyrant Megapenthes is shocked to discover that the afterlife has no regard for the elevated social position he enjoyed while alive (*Cat.* 13).

a trophy into the afterlife, “because I was victorious ... and *gained the highest distinction* (ἀριστεύω), and the city honored me” (*Dial. mort.* 20.7). In keeping with the removal of distinctions (and the preservation of peace), Hermes directs him to leave his trophy on earth above: “for in Hades there is peace (εἰρήνη) and there will not be a need for any weapons” (*Dial. mort.* 20.7).³⁷ The transition to the afterlife thus requires a certain destruction of those aspects of one’s identity that one cherishes the most. It just so happens that these are the very aspects that mark people as superior to others.³⁸

The elimination of distinctions in the afterlife is the central concern of the penultimate dialogue, between Diogenes and Mausolus. Noting that he was not only a king and ruler but also that he subdued and subjected lands, Mausolus cites his royal position on earth as the reason that he is proud and worthy to be honored more than others (*Dial. mort.* 29.1). After referring to being handsome, tall, and mighty in war, Mausolus cites the chief reason for his pride: the vast memorial (μνημα) that lies over him in Halicarnassus. He boasts that no other memorial is as great as his own, nor as beautifully adorned. “Don’t you think it is right to be so proud (φρονεῖν) of these things?” he concludes (*Dial. mort.* 29.1). After clarifying that “these things” refer to Mausolus’s kingdom, beauty, and the weight of his tomb, Diogenes articulates the reigning law of the afterlife: “But, O handsome Mausolus, neither the strength nor that beautiful form are still with you” (*Dial. mort.* 29.2).

This law not only reiterates the inability to take goods into the afterlife but also stresses the afterlife’s dominant ethos regarding the elimination of all distinctions. The

³⁷ Lucian elsewhere depicts the afterlife as a place where all people are at peace (εἰρήνη) (*Cat.* 15). The peaceful nature of the afterlife is in stark contrast to the world in which people die fighting with one another over possessions (*Cat.* 21).

³⁸ Such is the case for those in Hades who must strip off their wealth, lineage, and power (*Men.* 12).

consequent equality enables Lucian to reassess the value ascribed to those things which serve to distinguish people from one another. Diogenes points out, for example, that there is little or no difference between the skull of Mausolus and his own. Diogenes also underscores the uselessness of Mausolus's memorial. Although his tomb and its costly marble might give cause for the people of Halicarnassus to boast, Diogenes cannot see what benefit it provides to Mausolus (*Dial. mort.* 29.2). The absence of distinctions not only prevents bringing distinguishing traits into death, but also makes such traits useless. Mausolus articulates the chief concern underlying this and other dialogues: "Will all those things, therefore, be useless (ἀνόνητα) to me? And will Mausolus and Diogenes be held in equal honor (ἰσότημος)?" (*Dial. mort.* 29.3). Menippus succinctly encapsulates a central tenet of the afterlife and of Lucian's *Dialogues*, declaring in the *Dialogues*' penultimate line: "For in Hades all are of equal privilege (ἰσοτιμία) and alike (ὅμοιοι)" (*Dial. mort.* 30.2).³⁹ By demonstrating the uselessness of distinguishing characteristics in the afterlife, Lucian encourages people to reassess the value people ascribe to such traits.

The elimination of distinguishing characteristics results in an afterlife that is primarily characterized by its equality.⁴⁰ Chiron describes the "equal privilege" (ἰσοτιμία) he observes in the afterlife as "entirely democratic (δημοτική)" (*Dial. mort.* 8.2).⁴¹ The erasure of physical and physiological traits makes it impossible to distinguish between people's appearances. Diogenes notes the absence of differentiating traits (golden hair, light-blue or dark eyes, rosy face, vigorous sinews, strong shoulders), and declares that "all with us is one dust ... skulls stripped of beauty" (*Dial. mort.* 1.3).

³⁹ Menippus utters this line as an explanation for refusing to judge if one person is more handsome than another.

⁴⁰ This equality also characterizes the afterlife in Lucian's other works (*Cat.* 15; *Char.* 22).

⁴¹ For an example of what this might look like during life, see Strabo, *Geography*, 7.3.9.

Leaving behind physical characteristics at death leads Menippus to declare, in the final dialogue, his inability to judge whether one person is more handsome than another (*Dial. mort.* 30.2).⁴²

The chief distinction removed in the afterlife is an economic one. In the postmortem experience there is no longer any difference between the poor and the wealthy.⁴³ Included in the many items that Hermes forbids a philosopher to bring into the afterlife are gold, pleasure-filled living (ἡδυσπάθειαν), and luxury (τρυφήν) (*Dial. mort.* 20.8).⁴⁴ Craton must likewise remove those items such as wealth (πλοῦτον) and luxury (τρυφήν) that would mark him as superior to others (*Dial. mort.* 20.6).⁴⁵ Hermes further charges him not to bring

obsequies nor the ancestors' honors, but leave behind even family and fame (even if the city publicly proclaimed you), and the inscriptions on the statues, and do not speak of the great tomb they keep over you. For even mentioning these things is weary (*Dial. mort.* 20.6).

Craton's acquiescence to these instructions underscores the impossibility of breaking this proscription of postmortem socio-economic distinctions.

⁴² In *Cataplus*, the afterlife is also characterized by the inability to distinguish whether someone is more beautiful (κάλος) than another (22; cf. *Men.* 15).

⁴³ Micyllus finds that there is no demanding back of debtors' debts and no payment of taxes in the afterlife (*Cat.* 15).

⁴⁴ Hermes also forbids the philosopher from bringing his shamelessness (ἀναίσχυντίαν), temper (ὀργήν), and effeminacy (μαλακίαν). The "heaviest" item carried by the philosopher is his flattery (κολακείαν) (*Dial. mort.* 20.9). The lengthiest and most vicious attack in the Dialogues is directed towards this philosopher. Lucian elsewhere critiques those who "cultivate philosophy for hire and put virtue on sale over a counter" (*Nigr.* 25). A philosopher "who intends to teach contempt for wealth should first of all show that he is himself above gain" (*Nigr.* 25-26). Lucian accuses philosophers of being greedy, hypocritical (they rail against wealth and pleasure, but indulge in luxury), and failing to contribute anything to the world (*Symp.* 36; *Icar.* 29-31; *Vit. auct.* 12; *Pisc.* 34-36; *Par.* 52; *Men.* 5).

⁴⁵ Lucian elsewhere notes that the Athenians look down upon anyone who seeks to introduce luxury (τρυφή) among them (*Nigr.* 12). For an illustration of how the Athenians educate a luxurious visitor regarding his erroneous ways, see *Nigr.* 13. Athens is suited for one who despises wealth (πλούτος καταφρονέω) (*Nigr.* 14). The decadence of Rome is reflected in its welcoming of one who "loves wealth" (πλούτος ἐράω) and whose soul (ψυχή) is committed to pleasure (ἡδονή) (*Nigr.* 15-17).

The parity experienced in the afterlife causes some people to reevaluate the perspectives and values held during life. While living, Achilles preferred a glorious death to living a lengthy life in obscurity. Achilles is quickly disillusioned, however, with the afterlife because of its egalitarian nature. He discovers in the afterlife that glory is useless (ἀνωφελής), despite the praise it receives among the living. Achilles observes that there is

equal honor with the dead, and neither beauty nor strength remain, but we all are lying dead under the same nether darkness, are all alike, and differing in no way from one another, and neither the Trojan dead fear me nor do the Greek dead serve me, but there is a strict equality of speech, and one dead person is like [another] (*Dial. mort.* 26.2).

This equality grieves Achilles, and leads him to prefer living as a servant rather than existing without any social hierarchy.

This elimination of distinctions and consequent equality in the afterlife provides an opportunity for characters in the dialogues to reframe their understanding of possessions. A primary consequence of the establishment of equality in the afterlife is a reorientation toward possessions in which greed and the hoarding of wealth is critiqued as a bankrupt enterprise.⁴⁶ Diogenes instructs Pollux to announce to the rich (πλουσίοις), “Why, O fools, do you guard (φυλάττετε) gold? And why do you torment yourselves by counting the interest, and adding together talents on talents, since you must come here shortly needing (only) one *obol*?” (*Dial. mort.* 1.3).⁴⁷ With such dialogue, Lucian presents readers with the possibility of reconsidering their own attitudes toward and use of

⁴⁶ In Lucian’s *Icaromenippus*, Menippus articulates this notion, one that is also similar to conclusions drawn in Qoheleth: “For ever since I examined the things of life closely, I began to find all human things (I mean riches and offices and powers) to be ridiculous and of poor quality and uncertain, despising them and supposing the earnest effort concerning these things was an obstacle to things truly worth effort” (*Icar.* 4). For another such reorientation towards greed and the rich, see *Icar.* 18.

⁴⁷ The obol is a coin one places in a corpse’s mouth in order to pay Charon’s fare.

possessions.⁴⁸ The potential imminence of death invites one to reassess, in particular, the futility of expending energy amassing riches.⁴⁹ Effort spent collecting wealth is deemed wasteful given that the fruit of one's labor is unable to accompany one beyond death.⁵⁰

Death and its aftermath provide a perspective that highlights the fragility of wealth. This view informs various questions Diogenes puts to Alexander. After asking how the latter is able to cope with leaving behind his wealth and its various accoutrements, Diogenes concludes: "Don't these things grieve you since they are passing beyond⁵¹ memory? Why are you weeping, O vain (μάταιος) one? Didn't the wise Aristotle teach you these things, not to deem the things from fortune to be secure (βέβαιος)?" (*Dial. mort.* 13.4).⁵² One of the ways that death thus relativizes the value of possessions is by exposing their promise to provide security as an illusion.⁵³ Lucian elsewhere suggests that true philosophy will lead one from desiring wealth (πλούτος), and considering it a blessing to ridiculing and criticizing it (*Nigr.* 4). Such ridicule is

⁴⁸ *Cataplus* includes just such a reassessment. While alive, Micyllus perceived the tyrant as a superhuman and thrice blessed because of his wealth. This perception changes after death, and Micyllus admits laughing at himself because he used to marvel at such a worthless creature (*Cat.* 16-17).

⁴⁹ Lucian reorients one's perception of the value of gold by juxtaposing its uselessness in the afterlife ("a yellow, heavy substance") with the violence it engenders among those who fight for it (*Char.* 11-12).

⁵⁰ Clotho faults the tyrant Megapenthes for (mistakenly) thinking that his gold and talents might be useful in the afterlife (*Cat.* 9).

⁵¹ One variant (β) reads ὑπό instead of ὑπέρ.

⁵² The inability to bring goods into the afterlife is the reason that once there, the poor laugh (οἱ πένητες γελῶμεν) while the rich grieve (ἀνιάω) and wail (οἰμώζω) (*Cat.* 15; cf. 17, 20). Note the parallel to Luke 6:20-21, 24-25. In *Cataplus*, the dead lament the loss of their wealth, fields, and house (*Cat.* 20; cf. *Men.* 18).

⁵³ Alexander acknowledges that the one thing he gained from Aristotle's wisdom is "grief for those things you've just enumerated, for I think them the greatest of goods" (*Dial. mort.* 13.5). For Lucian, one does not "own" one's goods so much as one is a "proprietor" of them for a given period of time. After death, "another takes them over and enjoys the title" (*Nigr.* 26).

fitting given the futility of yearning after wealth (*Nigr.* 20).⁵⁴ The pursuit of riches, claims Lucian, is due in part to an inability to perceive their true nature.⁵⁵

The absence and useless nature of possessions in the afterlife prompts further questions for those who spend their life pursuing them. In his response to Mausolus's query regarding whether he and Diogenes will be equal in the afterlife, Diogenes underscores the negative consequences of being overly attached to goods during one's life:

For Mausolus will lament when he remembers the things above on earth, in which he used to think he was happy (εὐδαίμονέω), but Diogenes will laugh at him. And he will speak of the tomb built for himself in Halicarnassus ... but Diogenes has not known if he even has some tomb for his body; for he didn't care about this; but he has left behind a report for the best people concerning this, that *he has lived a life of a man ... that is more lofty than your memorial, and is built on a firmer place* (*Dial. mort.* 29.3).⁵⁶

This statement suggests that *living well* is preferable to establishing monuments, and that the former is a more helpful and meaningful preparation for death than the latter. Both the *Dialogues* and the Egyptian "Immortality of the Writers" critique the establishment of monuments, but the latter proposes instead the profession of a scribe as the optimal way to secure one's memory. *The Dialogues* are less concerned with preserving memory and more interested in preparing for death by living well.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ On the ridiculousness of the rich, see Lucian, *Nigr.* 21-23. The futility of pursuing wealth is underscored by understanding that possessions are brief imaginary blessings (*Demon.* 8).

⁵⁵ Riches (personified) intimates that ignorance and deceit prevent people from seeing that she is lame and blind. This difficulty in accurately perceiving wealth is compounded by the "very lovely mask" that she wears. People thus become enamored with Riches, not knowing they are "falling in love with things hateful and ugly" (*Tim.* 27). People remain deluded even after becoming rich since Riches comes with a host of vices (conceit, folly, boasting, effeminacy, *hubris*, and deceit). Such vices cause one to admire that which one should shun (*Tim.* 28; cf. 32). In contrast, Lucian associates poverty (πενία) with toil, patient endurance, wisdom (σοφία), and manliness (*Tim.* 31; cf. 32-33).

⁵⁶ Emphasis mine.

⁵⁷ Lucian elsewhere critiques the building and inscribing of monuments (*Cat.* 9; *Men.* 17). Like the "Immortality of the Writers," Lucian underscores the fragility of monuments (*Cat.* 11).

The Dialogues constitute a rhetorical argument that one's ability to live well is incumbent upon one's willingness to contemplate death, and confront one's own mortality.⁵⁸ After pleading guilty to mocking the dead who lament their loss of wealth,⁵⁹ Menippus acknowledges enjoying tormenting such people since they were not only content "to live badly (κακῶς), but also in death they still have remembered and cling to the things above" (*Dial. mort.* 3.1).⁶⁰ The outrageous (ὑβρις) behavior of such people consists partly in their failure to "not at all remember about death." Menippus identifies this forgetfulness of death as the reason (τοιγαροῦν) that Croesus will "lament (οἰμώξεσθε) all those things that have been taken away" (*Dial. mort.* 3.2). The subsequent lament by Croesus,⁶¹ Midas, and Sardanapalus of their respective goods (many and great possessions, gold, luxury) confirms Menippus's indictment. Their wailing is a reminder that one's behavior in death illumines how well (or not) one has lived. Lucian, through Menippus, thus suggests that living well is incumbent upon, and enhanced by, one's contemplation of death.⁶² Like Qoheleth, Lucian insists that "to live always with death before their eyes" will enable people to cease their "vain (ματαίωσιν)

⁵⁸ Lucian's interest in living well is articulated in Menippus's quest to learn "what the best life is, and what life someone especially wise would choose" (*Men.* 6). Given the salient perspective that death provides on living well, it is no coincidence that Menippus's quest leads him to Hades.

⁵⁹ "Whenever we moan and groan at our memories of life above, Midas recalling his gold, Sardanapalus (Assur-Bani-Pal) his great luxury (πολλῆς τρυφῆς), and I, Croesus, my treasures (θησαυρῶν), he [Menippus] mocks and reviles us, calling us slaves and scum" (*Dial. mort.* 3.1).

⁶⁰ Emphasis mine. Pluto also faults Menippus for mocking these people on account that they "mourn (λυποῦνται) great losses" (*Dial. mort.* 3.1).

⁶¹ "Oh, ye gods, many and great possessions (κτημάτων) they were!" (*Dial. mort.* 3.2).

⁶² This point is explicit in Lucian's *Charon*: "If they had realized at the very beginning that they were mortal, and that after this brief sojourn in the world they would go away as from a dream, taking leave of everything above ground, they would live more sanely and would be less unhappy after death" (*Char.* 17).

toil” (*Char.* 20).⁶³ By contrast, a failure to remember one’s mortality results in becoming possessed (τυγχάνω) by one’s mortal goods (*Men.* 12).

Integral to living well is some type of detachment from one’s possessions and a relinquishment of avarice. Menippus models this disinterest in material goods. Upon entering death he voluntarily offers his bag and stick⁶⁴ to Hermes, and notes that he did not even bring his cloak (*Dial. mort.* 20.2). This readiness to leave behind his goods is the probable reason that Hermes calls him “best (ἄριστε) of men,” invites him to take the privileged front seat near the helmsman, and to examine everyone entering the boat (*Dial. mort.* 20.2).⁶⁵ His willingness to depart from his goods is, moreover, the chief cause of his ability to enter death and the afterlife without any of the weeping that characterizes others who die.⁶⁶ He is one of the few who welcomes death. When asked if he is grieved to die (ἄχθη ἀποθανών), he replies: “How so, when I was eagerly seeking (σπεύδω) death, even though no one invited [me]?” (*Dial. mort.* 20.11).⁶⁷ Death requires a parting from one’s possessions, and the willingness to enter death is partially rooted in a

⁶³ For Lucian, one should cease toiling since life does not endure forever, nothing people hold in honor is eternal, and one cannot take one’s goods into death. At death, one’s possessions are given to another (*Char.* 20).

⁶⁴ These two items are typical Cynic garb.

⁶⁵ Menippus is the one person allowed to keep anything in death. Hermes tells him he may keep his independence, plain speaking, cheerfulness, noble bearing, and laughter (*Dial. mort.* 20.9).

⁶⁶ Similarly, in *Cataplus*, poverty stricken Micyllus is one of the only ones with no need to lament during his transition to death (*Cat.* 20). Micyllus does offer a satirical lament over the loss of his scraps of leather, old shoes, and rotten sandals (*Cat.* 20).

⁶⁷ Menippus and Diogenes are the only characters who enter death willingly, “not having to be forced or pushed” (*Dial. mort.* 4.2). In *Cataplus*, the unwillingness to enter death is rooted in an attachment to one’s possessions (*Cat.* 8, 14-15). The soul (ψυχή), maintains the character Micyllus, attaches itself (προσέχω) to gold, silver, clothing, and dinners, and becomes unwilling to depart from them at death. The tie that binds people to such things is like an “unbreakable fetter (ἄρρηκτός ... δεσμός).” In the journey to Hades, such people are fearful, lament, and seek to turn back (*Cat.* 14). Micyllus’s willingness to enter death is due to not owning a farm, a communal house, gold, or furniture.

detachment from one's goods. The *Dialogues* suggest that such detachment enables one not only to enter death willingly but also to live meaningfully.⁶⁸

The postmortem elimination of socio-economic distinctions also has implications for the self-perception of the poor. Diogenes instructs Pollux,

“And to the poor (πένησιν) ... who are many and grieved with their circumstance and are sorry for their poverty (ἄπορίαν), tell [them] neither to weep nor lament; describe in detail the equality of privilege (ἰσοτιμίαν) here, and that they will see the rich ones there no better than they are themselves” (*Dial. mort.* 1.4).⁶⁹

As in *I Enoch*, reevaluating wealth from the perspective of the grave underscores its ephemeral nature. The transitory (and therefore limited) power of wealth is contrasted by Crates with the true “wealth” (κτῆμα) of wisdom⁷⁰ which lasts beyond the grave: “We therefore will possess wealth (πλούτων) even here, but they will have come carrying an obol” (*Dial. mort.* 21.4). Wealth is not only ephemeral,⁷¹ but it fails to provide meaning for those who have it during their lives. This failure to serve as a source of existential meaning is evident in the myriad problems wealth poses for its owners.⁷²

⁶⁸ Lucian elsewhere suggests that the rich, in comparison to the poor, “live a much more miserable (ἄθλιος) life than we” (*Gall.* 15; cf. 21).

⁶⁹ Similarly, those who bewail their poverty (πενία) fail to see that after dying, which will come shortly, they will no longer worry (*Demon.* 8).

⁷⁰ Diogenes and Crates inherit “wisdom (σοφίαν), independence (αὐτάρκειαν), truth, plain speaking (παρρησίαν), freedom” (*Dial. mort.* 21.3). “But no one else cared for wealth of this sort,” laments Crates, “or paid us attentions in the hope of inheriting (κληρονομήσειν) it from us; it was gold on which they all had their eyes” (*Dial. mort.* 21.4). Diogenes registers no surprise: “They were falling apart from rich living (διερρηκότες ὑπὸ τρυφῆς), and were like rotten purses; and so no sooner did one put wisdom or plain speech or truth into them, than it would fall out through a hole, for the bottom couldn't hold it ... But their gold they would keep safe with teeth or nails or any means in their power” (*Dial. mort.* 21.4).

⁷¹ On the ephemerality and fragility of wealth, see Lucian, *Tim.* 29, 36; *Char.* 18.

⁷² This point is a central motif in Lucian's *Gallus*. See especially *Gall.* 14-15, 20-25. Wealth is, in particular, a source of worry (φροντίζω) for its owners (*Gall.* 20; cf. 21-22, 29, 31; *Tim.* 36). Riches corrupt one with luxury, and cause one to be envied (*Tim.* 36, 56). Wealth is, in short, a “source of irreparable misfortunes” (*Tim.* 56; cf. *Par.* 12). For a self defense by the personification of Riches, see *Tim.* 38.

An important implication of this reassessment of the value of goods is that the absence of distinctions in the afterlife more accurately reflects reality than the presence of distinctions during one's life. Menippus hints at this very point in his refusal to ask Homer to describe what Nireus was like when he fought in the Greek army. Menippus states: "You speak to me of dreams; but I of the things I see and you now have" (*Dial. mort.* 30.2). Implicit in Menippus's quip is the suggestion that the present life is akin to a dream whereas the postmortem existence is more real than the dream-like existence upon earth.⁷³ Lucian elsewhere characterizes life as a procession (πομπή) or play (δρᾶμα) in which Fortune (Τύχη) assigns people various roles (*Men.* 16). Death marks the end of the procession, and one must return one's costume to Fortune. One thereby returns to one's state before birth, and no one is different than one's neighbor. This metaphor underscores both the brevity of life (compared with the afterlife) and the gifted nature of one's goods.⁷⁴ At any rate, Lucian's *Dialogues* propose that to live in light of a perspective informed by death is to live without regard for the temporal distinctions that characterize life on earth.⁷⁵

The reorientation provided by death also has implications for one's evaluation of greed. Avarice is the most common attitude that characters in the *Dialogues* display toward wealth.⁷⁶ Hermes complains to Charon that, in contrast to those who died long ago, many of the people dying now come "with their bellies and legs swollen with luxury (τρυφή)" (*Dial. mort.* 14.2). Most of these people die on account of their wealth,

⁷³ In *Charon*, Hermes likens life before death to a dream (*Char.* 17). In *Menippus*, the wealthy dead who are punished in Hades review their life "as if it were some dream" (*Men.* 12).

⁷⁴ At death one "returns" (ἀποδίδωμι) what one was given (*Men.* 16).

⁷⁵ The laws for behavior at banquets seek to enact this type of equality by erasing distinctions between the poor and rich (*Sat.* 17-18).

⁷⁶ Lucian elsewhere criticizes barbarians by calling them "money-lovers" (φιλόπλουτοί) (*Dom.* 6). In *Saturnalia*, the rich are associated with "pettiness, love of money, greed," and other vices (*Sat.* 14).

apparently conspiring against each other (*Dial. mort.* 14.2). Charon agrees, calling wealth “exceedingly much beloved” (*Dial. mort.* 14.2). Lucian disparages such greed and his depiction of the afterlife experience reinforces this critique.⁷⁷

Lucian’s critique of avarice and his proposal of a detachment (both attitudinal and practical) from goods diverges from Qoheleth’s recommendation of enjoyment.⁷⁸ Both instructions, however, are rooted in the perception of the inability to use goods after death. Lucian and Qoheleth thus illustrate how a similar perception of death can result in conflicting attitudes towards possessions and their use.

4.2.3 The Instability of Inheritance and the Distribution of Possessions

The construction of a will or testament and the related issue of inheritance receive significant attention in Jewish, Egyptian, and Greco-Roman texts. The *Testament of Abraham* presents the construction of a will and distribution of one’s possessions as an ideal use of goods given the potential imminence of death.⁷⁹ Qoheleth, on the other hand, highlights many of the potential problems and uncertainties regarding inheritances.⁸⁰ Ben Sira offers advice on issuing an inheritance,⁸¹ and, as I argued, proposes the commitment to one’s will and testament as one productive use of possessions in light of death. One can understand the construction of a will (in which one specifies the recipients of one’s inheritance) as an attempt to secure control in the face of death. Providing an inheritance can also function as a potential vehicle of remembrance.

⁷⁷ The folly of those who pursue luxury is evident in their desire that their clothing be burned at their future gravesite, and that servants adorn their gravesite with wreaths of flowers (*Nigr.* 30).

⁷⁸ This critique of greed is a common trope among cynics.

⁷⁹ *T. Ab.* 1:4-5; 4:11; 8:11; 15:1, 7.

⁸⁰ Qoh 2:18-21; 5:12-13.

⁸¹ Sir 9:6; 22:23; 33:23; 42:3

The creation of a will or testament is a potentially fruitful area to explore since it stands at the intersection of death and possessions. Moreover, the issue of an inheritance plays an important role in Luke 12:13-15 (the passage preceding the parable of the “Rich Fool”) and in two other Lukan parables.⁸²

In ancient Egyptian literature, the passing along of an inheritance was considered to be an appropriate way of handling one’s possessions. Inheritances were typically passed along to sons, sometimes only to the firstborn.⁸³ One didactic text notes the importance of providing for the funerary priest, even instructing that one “prefer him⁸⁴ even to your [heir]” (*AEL* I:59).⁸⁵ The act of handing over one’s possessions often occurred when one was in “old age and hear his death” (*AEL* I:231).⁸⁶

The only potential dilemma in Egyptian texts regarding an inheritance concerns riches that are procured through dishonest means. An expectation existed that one’s heirs would not, however, be able to inherit wealth or possessions that had been acquired unjustly. Whereas the “brave bestows wealth on the just,” the “cheat cannot retain his plunder.” This royal inscription on the poetical stela of Merneptah is followed by the explicit remark:

What a man has of ill-gotten wealth
Falls to others, not <his> children (*AEL* II:76).⁸⁷

⁸² See, e.g., the parable of the Father and Two Sons (15:11-32) and the parable of the Vineyard Tenants (20:9-16).

⁸³ See, e.g., the “Memphite Theology,” an Old Kingdom Pyramid text (*AEL* I:52-53); “the Story of Sinuhe,” a Middle Kingdom prose tale (*AEL* I:231).

⁸⁴ Lichtheim, *AEL* I:59: “He should be well endowed, so that he will perform the cultic services for the dead.

⁸⁵ The Instruction of Prince Hardjedef. This fragment, note Lichtheim, *AEL* I:58, is the earliest known example of the *Instruction* genre, likely from the fifth dynasty in the Old Kingdom. The Instruction was made by Hardjedef for his son, Au-ib-re.

⁸⁶ Ben Sira also recommends this as the time when one should distribute one’s inheritance (Sir 33:23).

⁸⁷ There is doubt about these last two lines.

Lucian's *Dialogues* highlight numerous problems and uncertainties associated with an inheritance. Frequent references are made to people scheming to inherit the property and riches of wealthy individuals. Such schemers, described on one occasion as "the ones who contemplate the estate" (*Dial. mort.* 15.1), are the central preoccupation of four successive dialogues (15, 16, 17, 18). Lucian consistently identifies greed as the primary motive of those who pursue the inheritances of others (*Dial. mort.* 16.3), describing such greedy pursuit as "vain gazing" (μάτην ἐπιχάινω) (*Dial. mort.* 15.1). Among the numerous examples he cites is the case of two rich (πλούσιος) cousins who "flatter one another for the property (κλήρος)" (*Dial. mort.* 21.1).⁸⁸ Myriad examples illustrate the intrigues and conspiracies surrounding attempts to procure inheritances. The greed of heirs results, at times, in failed murder plots (*Dial. mort.* 17.1). Cnemon laments the fact that he died before he could inherit the possessions of Hermolaus, and that Hermolaus instead inherited Cnemon's property when the latter died (*Dial. mort.* 18). Diogenes and Crates, by contrast, take pride in never having wished for someone's death in order that they might inherit possessions (*Dial. mort.* 21.3).

Death is understood to be a fitting (and hoped for) consequence of the greed fueled pursuers of inheritances (*Dial. mort.* 16.1).⁸⁹ Pluto wishes that the young men who plot to divide up an older man's inheritance would meet an early death, and that the old man would return to youth. Referring to the young men, he declares: "Let the wicked

⁸⁸ In *Cataplus*, the tyrant Megapenthes is accused of killing Cydimachus and his children, and taking their property (*Cat.* 8).

⁸⁹ Pluto tells Terpison that his death (at the young age of thirty) is just since Terpison spent all his time plotting against Thucritus, an older man, "and waiting for his possessions" (περιμένων τὸν κλήρον) (*Dial. mort.* 16.1).

come now, dying wickedly, leaving behind, from the midst of their hopes, their dreamed of wealth” (*Dial. mort.* 15.2).⁹⁰

In some instances, the anxiety filled quest for inheritances is itself identified as the cause of people’s deaths. Such is the case with Terpison who recounts: “... and I would often lie sleepless with worry (φροντίς), because I was counting each one, and getting things arranged. To me, these things at any rate have also become the cause of death—sleeplessness and worry” (φροντίς) (*Dial. mort.* 16.4).⁹¹

Those who scheme to inherit wealth do not, however, hold a monopoly on greed. Avarice is also cited as the primary reason why some refuse to leave their property or wealth to heirs. Diogenes claims that the poisoning of Damis by his son was “not unjust (ἄδικα)” since Damis, though he had a thousand talents “and lived luxuriously (τρυφάω)” at ninety, would not even give his son four obols (*Dial. mort.* 22.7). Diogenes notes that the money-lender Blepsias “was first in accusing himself of much folly (ἄνοια) since he was guarding the money (χρημα) for heirs who were not at all related, the vain one (μάταιος) thinking he would live forever (ἀεὶ βιώσεσθαι)” (*Dial. mort.* 22.7).

Those who develop wills intentionally mislead people into thinking that they will be named as heirs of their estate. Polystratus admits, for example, that he maintained a public façade of leaving each of his admirers as an heir “but the true wills (ἀληθεῖς διαθήκας)” were different (*Dial. mort.* 19.3).⁹² Even when there is consonance between

⁹⁰ Pluto hopes that all young men who with eagerness anticipate the deaths of older men in order to come into their wealth will die before the older men do (*Dial. mort.* 17.5).

⁹¹ Lucian often identifies wealth as a source of worry (*Gall.* 20; cf. 21-22, 29, 31; *Tim.* 36).

⁹² People had lavished affection on the elderly Polystratus because he was rich and childless (*Dial. mort.* 19.3). His true heir (κληρονόμον) was not anyone from his family (γένους) but rather a “pretty boy”

what is promised and the contents of a will, death might prevent one's intended heir from inheriting one's fortune. The two rich (πλούσιος) cousins Moerichus and Aristeas named each other as their respective heir. Yet after both died on the same day, their properties (κληροῖ) passed to two relatives who had no idea they would receive such things (*Dial. mort.* 21.2).

These stories illustrate the inability to predict with any certainty how someone will distribute their inheritance. It is only with the reading of the will (διαθήκη) that one can be certain of one's true intentions regarding the identity of their heir(s).⁹³ Both Qoheleth and Lucian highlight the fragile and undependable aspects of an inheritance. Whereas Qoheleth focused upon the inability to control who would inherit one's goods, Lucian draws attention to the uncontrollable aspects faced by the potential heirs of an inheritance.⁹⁴

4.3 Seneca's *Epistulae Morales*

The numerous missives comprising Seneca's *Epistulae Morales* are apt comparative texts for Luke's parable.⁹⁵ Seneca's lifespan (4 BCE – 65 CE) and the date of his epistles (63 - 65 CE) place them in the same social milieu as Luke-Acts.⁹⁶ Luke's

that Polystratus had bought. Simylus is glad to learn that none of the others inherited anything from Polystratus (*Dial. mort.* 19.4).

⁹³ Lucian elsewhere notes that the only time the sons of Rome speak the truth is in their wills (*Nigr.* 30). This they do, he asserts, so that they will not have to face the consequences of their truth-telling.

⁹⁴ In *Cataplus*, the tyrant Megapenthes is unhappy to discover in Hades that his failure to leave instructions for his gold results in his enemy inheriting it (*Cat.* 8). Instead of enjoying his wealth or sharing it with others, Megapenthes kept his treasure (θησαυρός) buried. An anonymous person in Hades laments the fact that his heir will "squander" the talents left to him (*Cat.* 20). Another person questions who will inherit his vines (*Cat.* 20).

⁹⁵ Bovon, *Saint Luc*, 256, notes the existence of numerous parallels between Luke's parable of the rich fool and Seneca. But he does not cite any specific texts from Seneca.

⁹⁶ After being banished in 41 CE, Seneca returned in 49 as the appointed tutor of Nero. He committed suicide in 65.

second volume even mentions Seneca's brother Gallio.⁹⁷ As examples of moral discourse, the epistles come close to the type of wisdom literature we have explored. The sapiential tenor of Seneca's letters is evident in the ubiquity of terms such as *philosophia*,⁹⁸ *philosophus*,⁹⁹ *sapientia*,¹⁰⁰ and *sapiens*.¹⁰¹ Seneca considers wisdom (*sapientia*) to be chief among the virtues, and the person who possesses it has "attained ... the most important goal" (*Ep.* 93.8).¹⁰² Most relevant to my study is the attention Seneca's letters give to death, possessions, and the relationship between these two themes.¹⁰³

4.3.1 Perceptions of Death

Death is a recurrent theme in Seneca's epistles, leading him at one point to refer to "all my deadly talk about death" (*Ep.* 58.37).¹⁰⁴ His letters express many of the same attitudes toward death that we have observed in other sapiential texts, including the unavailability and inevitability of death; death as the ultimate equalizer; and the universal fear of death.

⁹⁷ Acts 18:12, 14, 17.

⁹⁸ *Ep.* 4.2; 5.2, 4, 5; 8.7, 9; 14.11, 12; 15.1; 16.3, 4, 5; 17.2, 5, 6; 20.2; 21.9; 24.26; 29.12; 30.3; 37.9; 38.1; 40.7; 45.1, 2, 3; 48.10, 12; 50.9; 52.9; 53.10, 12; 55.4; 58.26; 71.7; 72.3; 73.1, 9; 78.3; 82.5, 7; 88.24, 25; 89.1, 4, 6, 8-11, 16-17; 90.1-2, 20, 35; 94.1, 2, 4; 94.13, 24, 31, 39, 47; 95.10, 12, 37, 61, 64; 98.17; 99.14; 102.20; 103.4; 106.12; 108.1, 17, 22, 23, 25, 30, 36; 111.4; 115.18; 117.33; 123.17.

⁹⁹ *Ep.* 16.5; 39.2; 40.2; 52.13; 94.9; 95.23; 100.1; 108.6, 9.

¹⁰⁰ *Ep.* 6.4; 9.1, 14, 22; 11.1, 6, 7; 14.10, 13; 16.1; 17.8, 10; 20.5; 22.16; 26.3; 29.3; 52.6; 59.16; 67.14; 71.7, 19, 30; 72.6; 75.9, 10; 79.8; 81.23; 85.32; 88.33; 89.4, 5, 6; 90.26; 93.8; 94.50; 95.1, 7, 13, 60; 98.9; 104.19; 117.1, 25, 31, 33.

¹⁰¹ *Ep.* 9.3, 8, 13, 15, 16; 11.1; 14.8, 14, 16; 17.9; 29.7; 30.8; 31.2; 59.8; 66.18; 70.4, 14; 71.30; 72.8; 73.13; 81.14; 85.38; 87.18; 88.26; 92.14, 24; 93.10; 94.52; 109.2-3; 117.8.

¹⁰² Seneca distinguishes between wisdom (the "perfect good of the human mind") and philosophy (the "love of wisdom, and the endeavor to attain it") (*Ep.* 89.4).

¹⁰³ For an introduction to Seneca, see Anna Lydia Motto, *Seneca Sourcebook: Guide to the Thought of Lucius Annaeus Seneca. In the extant prose works—Epistulae Morales, the Dialogi, De Beneficiis, De Clementia, and Quaestiones Naturale* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1970).

¹⁰⁴ I follow the English translations in Seneca, *Epistulae Morales* (trans. Richard M. Gummere; LCL; 3 vols; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925).

Seneca repeatedly mentions and emphasizes the unavoidability and inevitability of death.¹⁰⁵ Death is the one certainty amid a life that is otherwise filled with uncertainties.¹⁰⁶ He concurs with Cato's statement that the entire human race, "both that which is and that which is to be, is condemned to die" (*Ep.* 71.15). In short, everyone must suffer loss and death (*Ep.* 91.19).¹⁰⁷ Death strikes people at all different ages¹⁰⁸ and in myriad different ways (*Ep.* 66.42-43), but it does strike all.¹⁰⁹ No one can escape from its grasp since death is an integral aspect of being human (*Ep.* 99.8).¹¹⁰ One cannot be born and not die.¹¹¹ People die differently but they all succumb to the experience of death. "The methods of ending life are different; but the end is one and the same. Death has no degrees of greater or less; for it has the same limit in all instances,--the finishing of life (*finesse vitam*)" (*Ep.* 66.13).

The brevity and fragility of life underscore the potential imminence of death. The time given one to live is scant and time passes more quickly as one ages (*Ep.* 48.12; 49.4; 58.23). The fragility of life is further evident in the multiple and unpredictable opportunities to die unexpectedly (*Ep.* 4.8). Fortune is capable of ending life just as she indulged one's life (*Ep.* 4.7).¹¹²

¹⁰⁵ *Ep.* 4.9; 70.27; 71.15; 77.11-13; 78.6; 91.19; 93.12; 99.7-9, 22; 101.14-15; 117.21. Death is the "ultimate and inevitable end" (*ultimum ac necessarium*) (*Ep.* 117.21).

¹⁰⁶ "The period which lies between our first day and our last is shifting and uncertain ... Everything is slippery, treacherous, and more shifting than any weather. All things are tossed about and shift into their opposites at the bidding of Fortune; amid such a turmoil of mortal affairs nothing but death is surely in store for anyone" (*Ep.* 99.9).

¹⁰⁷ "You will die, not because you are ill, but because you are alive" (*Ep.* 78.6).

¹⁰⁸ Cf. *Ep.* 70.3-4.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. *Ep.* 71.15. Some are wasted away by sloth, "or by that vice which is fraught with destruction even for mighty dynasties,--luxury."

¹¹⁰ "Whoever complains about the death of anyone, is complaining that he was a man. Everyone is bound by the same terms" (*Ep.* 99:7).

¹¹¹ "... he who is privileged to be born, is destined to die" (*Ep.* 99.8).

¹¹² "Do not trust her seeming calm; in a moment the sea is moved to its depths. The very day the ships have made a brave show in the games, they are engulfed. Reflect that a highwayman or an enemy

Although not all people experience death equally, death does make all people equal. As in Lucian's *Dialogues*, death functions as an ultimate equalizer in its elimination of any and all distinctions between people. Death is "the point where the prosperous man is upset, and the point where the unfortunate is set free" (*Ep.* 110.4). People who are "unequal at birth" become "equal in death (*pares morimur*)" (*Ep.* 91.16). Periods of time may separate individuals but death levels everyone (*Ep.* 99.8-9).

Despite the universality of death, most people, in Seneca's view, fear death and are unwilling to face their own mortality.¹¹³ There is no place, he claims, where one can be free from the fear of death (*Ep.* 82.4). This fear, often manifest in the hope or attempt to prolong one's life, makes a peaceful or contented life impossible (*Ep.* 4.4-5). People who fear death "are unwilling to live, and yet they do not know how to die" (*Ep.* 4.5).

Seneca consistently stresses the need for everyone, both young and old,¹¹⁴ to face death and one's own mortality.¹¹⁵ Facing death entails both a willing readiness to die as well as contemplation of one's mortality throughout one's life. He insists that one must, throughout life, prepare to meet death (*Ep.* 82.8).¹¹⁶ Each day should be regarded as one's last (*Ep.* 12.8; 93.6).¹¹⁷ The proper attitude toward death is not fear but scorn (*contemno*) (*Ep.* 75.14), and he counsels Lucilius: "Despise death (*contemne mortem*). There is no

may cut your throat; and, though he is not your master, every slave wields the power of life and death over you." (*Ep.* 4.7-8).

¹¹³ *Ep.* 4.9; 58.23; 77:11, 16-20; 82.16, 23; 85.26-27; 91.19-21; 102.26; 104.25, 33. Diogenes also speaks of the fear of death hanging over everyone (*Ep.* 28.5).

¹¹⁴ *Ep.* 12.6.

¹¹⁵ *Ep.* 4.3-6, 9; 24; 58.23; 63.16; 67.8-10; 69.6; 70.9; 74.30; 76.28-29; 77.14-15, 19; 78.5-6; 80.5-6; 92.35; 93.12; 104.25, 33; 117.21; 120.14-15.

¹¹⁶ So Diogenes who emphasizes the need to practice (*μελετήσῃς*) how to die (Diogenes, 39.3, 13).

¹¹⁷ He cites the example of Pacuvius who held a regular burial sacrifice for himself, having himself "carried out to burial every day," while eunuchs sang: 'He has lived his life, he has lived his life!' (*Ep.* 12.8-9).

sorrow in the world, when we have escaped from the fear of death” (*Ep.* 78.5-6).¹¹⁸ One’s heart “is never more divine than when it reflects upon its mortality” (*Ep.* 120.14).

Contemplating one’s inevitable death can allow one to be calm in the face of the ever present possibility of death (*Ep.* 4.9).¹¹⁹

In addition to contemplating death, one must not fearfully flee its arrival. People such as Socrates exemplify how to face death honorably (*Ep.* 70.9).¹²⁰ Socrates remained in prison to free humankind from “the fear of two most grievous things, death and imprisonment” (*Ep.* 24.4-5).¹²¹ The brave endurance of death is a glorious feat, ranking “among the greatest accomplishments of the human mind” (*Ep.* 82.17). Examples of those who have “despised death” (*contempores mortis*) are many (*Ep.* 24.11).¹²² The greatest proof of a lofty soul is that it is not afraid to depart the body at death (*Ep.* 120.15). Ideally, one will not only face death but welcome its arrival.¹²³

Seneca maintains that perceiving death accurately will enable people to face it and overcome their fear of it. Fools, for example, fear death because they believe that the

¹¹⁸ Cf. *Ep.* 82:16: “Death ought to be despised (*contemni*) more than it is wont to be despised.” One should not fear death precisely because it inspires us with fear (*Ep.* 4.3).

¹¹⁹ “Why do you voluntarily deceive yourself and require to be told now for the first time what fate it is that you have long been laboring under? Take my word for it: since the day you were born you are being led thither. We must ponder this thought, and thoughts of the like nature, if we desire to be calm as we await the last hour, the fear of which makes all previous hours uneasy” (*Ep.* 4.9).

¹²⁰ Though see Lucian, *Dial. mort.* 4.1, for a portrait of Socrates as a coward before death.

¹²¹ Facing death honorably may, at times, require suicide. He discusses whether one should commit suicide if one is awaiting certain death or being tortured (*Ep.* 70.7-15). Suicide is honorable in some cases (“the foulest death is preferable to the cleanest slavery,” *Ep.* 70.21) but not in all (*Ep.* 70.20-26). Seneca’s own suicide in 65 CE shows that these discussions were not esoteric reflections of *adiaphora*.

¹²² In addition to Socrates, he mentions Scipio, Mucius, and Cato. The latter “had the will to die” (*Ep.* 24.6, 10). He states he cites these examples “for the purpose of encouraging you to face that which is thought to be most terrible” (*Ep.* 24.9).

¹²³ On the other hand, one should not pursue death (*Ep.* 117.21-24). He cites Epicurus approvingly: “It is absurd to run towards death because you are tired of life, when it is your manner of life that has made you run towards death.” Seneca understands this quote to be a critique of “those who crave, as much as those who shrink from, death” (*Ep.* 24.22). “Nothing is baser,” he claims, “than to pray for death” (*Ep.* 117.22). One who prays for death, he contends, does not really wish to die since one is capable of taking one’s own life at any time (*Ep.* 117.24). One does not seek out death but one is prepared and welcomes its advent.

transition to it is a “dangerous reef” (*Ep.* 70.2). Knowing that death is not evil, however, enables one to face it and not be fearful (*Ep.* 82.13-14, 23; 85.26-27). In fact, the only evil aspect of death is the fear which precedes its arrival (*Ep.* 104.10). The natural inevitability of death is another reason adduced for facing death calmly. Since death “visits each and all What does it matter for how long a time you avoid that which you cannot escape?” (*Ep.* 93.12). By highlighting the naturalness of death, Seneca underscores the irrationality involved with fearing it. The fear of a disease is understandable, yet the fear of death “is not fear of a disease but of nature” (*Ep.* 78.6).

Seneca is uncertain with regards to what happens to a person after death, and ambivalent regarding the existence of an afterlife. On the one hand, he suggests the possibility that death utterly annihilates (*consumo*) one, after which “nothing mortal remains” (*Ep.* 24.18; 93.10). In this scenario, death is a return to what one was before birth.¹²⁴ Although he does not fear such “non-existence (*non esse*),” he does admit that it is death’s greatest disadvantage.¹²⁵ His lack of fear is due to a dual recognition that non-existence is merely a return to what one was before birth (*Ep.* 65.24), and that there is no suffering after death (*Ep.* 54.5).¹²⁶ “If we are annihilated,” he writes, “nothing remains; good and bad are alike removed” (*Ep.* 24.18).

On the other hand, Seneca entertains the possibility that death does not annihilate but rather “strips us bare (*exuit*). If we are then released, there remains the better part, after the burden has been withdrawn” (*Ep.* 24.18). In this scenario, one can enjoy a postmortem existence with the gods (*Ep.* 102.22). This experience exceeds that lived on

¹²⁴ “It is all the same; you will not be, and you were not” (*Ep.* 77.11; cf. 54.4-5).

¹²⁵ *Ep.* 54.4-5; 65.24; 99.30.

¹²⁶ Before and after death there is “a deep peace,” and one’s experience after death will be the same as that before death (*Ep.* 54.5).

earth: “These delays of mortal existence are a prelude to the longer and better life” (*Ep.* 102.22-23). One’s mortal life is a preparation for “another birth” (*Ep.* 102.23). In short, death is “either the end, or a process of change” (*Ep.* 65.24).

One thing of which Seneca is certain is that the soul departs the body at the moment of death.¹²⁷ Moreover, the soul cannot perish (*Ep.* 71.16).¹²⁸ Precisely whither the soul goes is not clear. One possibility is that the soul enters a “better life, destined to dwell with deity amid greater radiance and calm” (*Ep.* 71.16). Another possibility is that the soul “without suffering any harm to itself, [is] mingled with nature again, and will return to the universe” (*Ep.* 71.16).¹²⁹

4.3.2 Possessions and Wealth

Most of Seneca’s comments on wealth appear in the form of criticisms of greed, pleasures, and luxury.¹³⁰ He frequently derides greed (*aviditas*) and avarice (*avaritia*),¹³¹ identifying these twin “chronic” vices with an insatiable hunger for more wealth and goods. He considers the following to be an especially “effective” proverb: “The greedy mind is satisfied by no gains” (*Ep.* 94.43). “Having much” leads one to desire more “but he who has enough has attained that which never fell to the rich man’s lot—a stopping-point” (*Ep.* 119.6). Some people “crave (*concupisceret*) something more after obtaining everything” (*Ep.* 119.8). Yet instead of making people rich, money “always smites men with a greater craving for itself He who possesses more begins to be able to possess

¹²⁷ *Ep.* 70.12; 82.12; cf. 76.25; 86.1; 92.33; 102.22-23; 120.15. Diogenes describes death as the departure of the soul (*ψυχή*) from the body (*σῶμα*) (39.3, 8-9, 28-29).

¹²⁸ For an extended treatment of the soul, see *Ep.* 113.

¹²⁹ He also recognizes the possibility that the soul might enter the body of another person or animal (*Ep.* 108.18-21).

¹³⁰ On the public display of luxury in Rome, see Karl-Wilhelm Weeber, *Luxus im alten Rom. Die öffentliche Pracht* (Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 2006).

¹³¹ *Ep.* 7.7; 19.7; 75.11, 14; 76.4; 90.36, 38-39; 94.23; 95.33; 104.20; 108.9-11; 110.9; 115.16.

still more” (*Ep.* 119.9).¹³² One is thus never content, living instead as a “slave to greed” (*Ep.* 110.9).¹³³ Such slavery makes greed a hindrance to meaningful living.

Seneca frequently castigates luxury,¹³⁴ often associating this vice with greed.¹³⁵ Like avarice, luxury only teaches one to “crave more (*maiora cupere*)” (*Ep.* 16.8). Avarice and luxury are both relationally disruptive, breaking “the bonds that hold mortals together” (*Ep.* 90.36). Greed and luxury are contagious, and a luxurious friend augments one’s own covetousness (*Ep.* 7.7).¹³⁶ A recurring target of Seneca’s ire is gluttony,¹³⁷ the luxurious indulgence of food.¹³⁸ He contrasts those who live in luxury with those who toil (*Ep.* 96.5), preferring to live in the latter rather than in the former (*Ep.* 82.2).¹³⁹

Closely related to Seneca’s repudiation of luxury is his denunciation of pleasure (*voluptas*) and those who submit to it (*Ep.* 114.23).¹⁴⁰ He identifies the service of pleasure as the “source of all evil” (*Ep.* 110.10). He accuses people of seeking “pleasure from every source,” (*Ep.* 95.33) and hopes that “minds [will] be removed from “allurements of pleasure (*voluptatem*)” (*Ep.* 51.5). Pleasure presents the same trap as luxury: those who sink themselves into it find that “what was once superfluous to them

¹³² “Suppose that the property of many millionaires is heaped up in your possession. Assume that fortune carries you far beyond the limits of a private income, decks you with gold, clothes you in purple, and brings you to such a degree of luxury and wealth that you can bury the earth under your marble floors; that you may not only possess, but tread upon, riches. Add statues, paintings, and whatever any art has devised for the satisfaction of luxury; you will only learn from such things to crave still greater” (*Ep.* 16.8).

¹³³ Plutarch also identifies greed (*πλεονεξία*) as a source of an insatiable hunger for more wealth (*Cupid. divit.* 2-3).

¹³⁴ *Ep.* 7.7; 16.8; 71.15; 73.23-25; 74.18-19; 82.2, 10; 90.18-19, 36; 94.23; 95.16-18, 33, 42; 96.5; 97.1; 112.4; 114.3, 9, 25; 115.8-8; 119.15; 122.3-14; 124.3.

¹³⁵ “Luxury,” he maintains, “is precipitated into greed” (*Ep.* 95.33).

¹³⁶ Seneca here identifies luxury with “the world,” telling Lucilius he “must either imitate or loathe the world” (*Ep.* 7.7).

¹³⁷ *Ep.* 95.24-25; 108.14-16.

¹³⁸ *Ep.* 18.11-12; 94.22; 110.11-18; 119.13-14.

¹³⁹ For a positive evaluation of toil, see *Ep.* 95.18. On one occasion he describes toil negatively: “Work is not a good (*Labor bonum non est*). Then what is a good? I say, the scorning (*contemptio*) of work. That is why I should rebuke men who toil to no purpose (*in vanum*)” (*Ep.* 31.4).

¹⁴⁰ Cf. *Ep.* 51.8; 74.14-15; 110.10.

has become indispensable” (*Ep.* 39.6).¹⁴¹ People thereby become “slaves of their pleasures (*voluptatibus*) instead of enjoying (*fruuntur*) them” (*Ep.* 39.6).

As he does with life itself, Seneca accentuates the fragile nature of wealth and possessions. Their ephemeral nature is rooted in their status as (divine) gifts.¹⁴² At one point Seneca identifies “God, who is the Father of us all,” as the source of these gifts (*Ep.* 110.10).¹⁴³ The status of goods as divine gifts has implications for the identity of the true owner of such goods. As Seneca avers, “what Chance has made yours is not really yours” (*Ep.* 8.10). A consequence, therefore, of viewing possessions as divine gifts is that they are able to be removed as easily as they are given (*Ep.* 8.9-10). Whereas the same understanding leads Qoheleth to recommend that one enjoy such goods, Seneca responds by eschewing such enjoyment.¹⁴⁴

Seneca, like Lucian, establishes a close relationship between luxury and anxiety. One cannot obtain luxury, he maintains, “except with wretchedness and anxiety” (*Ep.* 119.15). This path is in sharp contrast to the “laws of life” that are laid down by the “Builder of the universe,” and which provide “well-being” (*Ep.* 119.15). The craving for

¹⁴¹ Cf. his citation of Epicurus: “Whoever does not regard what he has as most ample wealth, is unhappy, though he be master of the whole world” (*Ep.* 9.20). Seneca contrasts needs (provided by nature) and the superfluous (*supervacuus*). “It is the superfluous things for which men sweat, – the superfluous things that wear out togas threadbare, that force us to grow old in camp, that dash us upon foreign shores. That which is enough is ready to our hands. He who has made a fair compact with poverty is rich” (*Ep.* 4.10-11).

¹⁴² Seneca alternately refers to the source of such gifts as “God,” “Jupiter,” “Fortune,” or “Chance.”

¹⁴³ God is said to have “placed ready to our hands those things which he intended for our own good; he did not wait for any search on our part, and he gave them to us voluntarily” (*Ep.* 110.10).

¹⁴⁴ In Lucian’s *Timon*, Hermes claims that divine gifts are not to be thrown away (*Tim.* 37). Zeus, the “Wealth Giver,” distributes (δικαδίδωμι) gifts such as wealth and gold to whomever he desires (*Sat.* 2, 14). This understanding of goods as divine gifts is similar to what we observed in Qoh 2:24-26; 3:13; 5:17-18; 6:2. Also similar to Qoheleth is the indiscriminate nature of such giving. Zeus sometimes sends away those who are good and wise, and pours out wealth on the all-wicked and foolish men (Lucian, *Sat.* 3; cf. 11).

riches leads instead to “daily worry” and fear (*Ep.* 14.18; 115.16).¹⁴⁵ This fearful anxiety, ironically, stymies the enjoyment of one’s goods since one is perpetually trying to accrue more goods (*Ep.* 14.18). Anxiety, the product of the pursuit of goods, renders such goods incapable of enjoyment.¹⁴⁶ Possessing riches, he argues, “means even greater agony of spirit than the acquisition of riches” (*Ep.* 115.16). The price one pays (anxiety, danger, lost honor, personal freedom, and time) in pursuing certain objects indicates that some people regard themselves as the cheapest of all (*Ep.* 42.7).

Seneca proposes moderation, simplicity, and contentment as alternatives and solutions to the vices of avarice and indulgence. He enjoins moderation as an ideal practice,¹⁴⁷ particularly in the treatment of one’s body (*Ep.* 8.5; 14.1-2).¹⁴⁸ One should even be willing to sacrifice one’s body if reason, self-respect, and duty so demand (*Ep.* 14.2). Simplicity, a step beyond moderation but not yet at the point of poverty, is also recommended as a proper use of possessions (*Ep.* 8.5; 25.4). One can be simple in eating, drinking, dressing, and furnishing one’s home.¹⁴⁹ A lifestyle of simplicity is predicated upon an understanding that nature provides for one’s basic needs, bread and water. Possessions differ in not being “essential.” Seneca calls for a “return to the law of nature;

¹⁴⁵ The “daily worry” is in direct proportion to the measure of possessions gained (*Ep.* 115.16).

¹⁴⁶ “While he puzzles over increasing his wealth, he forgets how to use it. He collects his accounts, he wears out the pavement in the forum, he turns over his ledger, --in short, he ceases to be master and becomes a steward” (*Ep.* 14.18).

¹⁴⁷ *Ep.* 5.5-6; cf. 14.15.

¹⁴⁸ The body is only to be indulged for the purpose of good health (*Ep.* 8.5). “I do maintain that the body is not to be indulged at all; but I maintain that we must not be slaves to it. Our too great love for it makes us restless with fears, burdens us with cares, and exposes us to insults. Virtue is held too cheap by the man who counts his body too dear” (*Ep.* 14.1).

¹⁴⁹ “Eat merely to relive your hunger; drink merely to quench your thirst; dress merely to keep out the cold; house yourself merely as a protection against personal discomfort. It matters little whether the house be built of turf, or of variously colored imported marble; understand that a man is sheltered just as well by a thatch as by a roof of gold. Despise everything that useless toil creates as an ornament and an object of beauty. And reflect that nothing except the soul is worthy of wonder; for to the soul, if it be great, naught is great” (*Ep.* 8.5).

for then riches are laid up for us. The things which we actually need are free for all, or else cheap” (*Ep.* 25.4).

Seneca proposes contentment as the ideal attitude to hold towards one’s possessions and economic status. One is to be content if one is poor.¹⁵⁰ True poverty, he claims, is craving more than one has (*Ep.* 2.5).¹⁵¹ He cites approvingly a saying of Epicurus which identifies the road to riches not as the accumulation of money but as the subtraction of one’s desires (*Ep.* 21.7).¹⁵² Seneca grants that riches are acceptable to possess if one possesses the proper attitude towards them. He enjoins a kind of mental detachment from one’s possessions. “I would have you reach the point at which you possess it dauntlessly; this can be accomplished only by persuading yourself that you can live happily without it as well as with it, and by regarding riches always as likely to elude you” (*Ep.* 18.13). One can live amidst riches and be “truly great” if one is not spoiled by them (*Ep.* 20.10).

4.3.3 The Interplay of Death and Possessions

Although death and possessions figure prominently in the Epistles, Seneca does not treat them together as often as one finds in the Jewish texts studied in the previous chapter. The lower frequency with which the motifs occur together seems to reflect a difference between Jewish and Greco-Roman literature.

¹⁵⁰ He cites Epicurus approvingly: “Contented poverty is an honorable estate” (*Ep.* 2.5).

¹⁵¹ “What does it matter how much a man has laid up in his safe, or in his warehouse, how large are his flocks and how fat his dividends, if he covets his neighbor’s property, and reckons, not his past gains, but his hopes of gains to come? Do you ask what is the proper limit to wealth? It is, first, to have what is necessary, and, second, to have what is enough” (*Ep.* 2.5-6).

¹⁵² Seneca imagines a garden whose pleasure (*voluptas*) is not the whetting of one’s appetite but its quenching, and where one’s thirst is slaked (*Ep.* 21.10).

The juxtaposition of death and possessions in the Epistles is to be understood within Seneca's broader concern, emphasized repeatedly, for the importance of the quality rather than the quantity of one's life. One should be concerned, he maintains, not with the length of one's life but with how well one lives (*Ep.* 70.4-6).¹⁵³ Employing the analogy of a play, he notes that "it matters not how long the action is spun out, but how good the acting is" (*Ep.* 77.20). He also establishes a link between one's death and how one lives. Living nobly is often incompatible with living a long life (*Ep.* 101.15). "[D]ying well means escape from the danger of living ill" (*Ep.* 70.6). An essential component of living well concerns one's attitude towards and use of possessions.

4.3.3.1 Pleasures, Luxury, and the Fear of Death

Seneca associates the fear of death with luxury (e.g., *Ep.* 122.3), and attributes this universal fear with the (equally universal) attachment to possessions. People fear death because it "seems to rob us of many goods and to withdraw us from the abundance to which we have become accustomed" (*Ep.* 82.15). Pleasures and luxury are identified as two specific causes of the fear of death (*Ep.* 77.16-20). The reluctance to relinquish one's possessions makes people unwilling to depart from a life in which their possessions will remain. The implication is that developing a detachment from one's goods is a *sine qua non* of facing death. Seneca stresses this point by insisting that rejecting pleasures (*voluptas*) and spurning wealth (*opes*) are necessary steps if one is to face, and eventually welcome, death (*Ep.* 104.25, 33-34). Even someone who is given over to luxury can endure suffering or want if one "ceases to shudder at death" (*Ep.* 78.25).

¹⁵³ "The point is, not how long you live, but how nobly you live" (*Ep.* 101.15).

Seneca links folly with greed and the attempt to prolong one's death. In addition to not being satisfied with their income, such people "grasp at the utmost space of time to which the life of man can be extended" (*Ep.* 120.17). He insists however that "we stand daily nearer the brink, and every hour of time thrusts us on towards the precipice over which we must fall" (*Ep.* 120.17-18).¹⁵⁴ Seneca intimates that the reluctance to separate from one's possessions is integrally related to one's desperate attempts at prolonging life. It is as though one's life is inextricably bound up with one's possessions, and one's own death necessitates the death of the other. Freedom requires that one become free both from the fear of death and, secondly, from the fear of poverty (*paupertas*) (80.5-6).

The inseparability of one's attachment to life and possessions is explicit in Seneca's hope that an accurate perception of death will free one to let go of life and possessions. Eventually, "Whatever is will cease to be, and yet it will not perish, but will be resolved into its elements" (*Ep.* 71.13). The mind of one who comprehends this reality "would endure with greater courage its own ending and that of its possessions" (*Ep.* 71.13-14).¹⁵⁵

4.3.3.2 Ingratitude, Insatiability, and the Fear of Death

Seneca identifies the fear of death as a source of despair for most individuals. People are driven to despair by the ubiquitous threat of death (*Ep.* 74.3).¹⁵⁶ People also respond to death by passing "unfavorable judgment on Providence because life is short"

¹⁵⁴ He continues, noting that death is not only in the future but "is happening at this minute, and a large portion of it has already happened; for it consists of our past lives. But we are mistaken in fearing the last day, seeing that each day, as it passes, counts just as much to the credit of death. The failing step does not produce, it merely announces, weariness. The last hour reaches, but every hour approaches, death. Death wears us away, but does not whirl us away" (*Ep.* 120.18).

¹⁵⁵ Seneca notes that the process of everything being broken up and put together again is done by "the eternal craftsmanship of God, who controls all things" (*Ep.* 71.13-14).

¹⁵⁶ "For there is no quarter from which death may not approach" (*Ep.* 74.3).

(*Ep.* 74.10). Seneca understands such comments as the source of ingratitude for the divine goods that one receives. “It is a result of complaints like these that we are unappreciative in our comments upon the gifts of heaven; we complain because they are not always granted to us, because they are few and unsure and fleeting” (*Ep.* 74.11). Seneca links such ingratitude to a fear of death, and he associates both with apathy towards life and death (*Ep.* 74.11). He characterizes this type of person as insatiable since “no amount of prosperity can satisfy us” (*Ep.* 74.11). The unending craving for the gifts that Fortune gives impedes one’s ability to respond with gratitude (*Ep.* 74.7-8).¹⁵⁷ So also does craving after goods stymie the ability to reflect upon one’s own mortality. “But how will a man take thought of his own end, if he craves all things without end? And yet there is nothing so essential for us to consider” (*Ep.* 70.17-18).

4.3.3.3 Luxury and the Living Dead

Seneca understands death not as a single event but as a lengthy process that continues throughout one’s entire life. He calls it a commonplace that “we do not suddenly fall on death, but advance towards it by slight degrees; we die every day” (*Ep.* 24.20).

For every day a little of our life is taken from us; even when we are growing, our life is on the wane. We love our childhood, then our boyhood, and then our youth. Counting even yesterday, all past time is lost time; the very day which we are now spending is shared between ourselves and death. It is not the last drop that empties the water-clock, but all that which previously has flowed out; similarly, the final hour when we cease to exist does not of itself bring death; it merely of itself completes the death-process. We reach death at that moment, but we have been a long time on the way (*Ep.* 24.20).

¹⁵⁷ Seneca contrasts this ingratitude with “virtue” which needs nothing since “it is pleased with what it has, and does not lust after that which it has not. Whatever is enough is abundant in the eyes of virtue” (*Ep.* 74.12).

Seneca cites this drawn out process of death as a reason for not needing to fear death.¹⁵⁸

One need not be afraid of mortality since the death “of which we are afraid, is the last but not the only death” (*Ep.* 24.21).¹⁵⁹

Although this slow death occurs in everyone, it is accelerated at an advanced pace in particular individuals. Seneca considers certain people to already be dead despite the fact that they are technically alive. One who spends his life in idleness, for example, “has not lived; he has merely tarried awhile in life. Nor has he died late in life; he has simply been a long time dying” (*Ep.* 93.3-4). Such a person has not lived, in this case, eighty years, but merely “existed eighty years, unless perchance you mean by ‘he has lived’ what we mean when we say that a tree ‘lives’” (*Ep.* 93.4).

Those who live in luxury are singled out as the primary example of the living dead. After noting that people who fear death are also given to luxurious banqueting, Seneca reflects that they are “not really banqueting; they are conducting their own funeral services” (*Ep.* 122.3). Although still alive, they are carrion (*Ep.* 122.4). These types are “as good as dead” (*Ep.* 122.10). The person who, for instance, lies on a perfumed couch “is no less dead than he who is dragged along by the executioner’s hook” (*Ep.* 82.3). Even leisure, if it is without study, is a “tomb for the living man” (*Ep.* 82.3-4).

Whereas living in luxury leads to a premature death, living well enables one to live after death. The living dead stand in sharp contrast to the person who “dies before one’s time but whose life has been complete” (*Ep.* 93.4). Such a person not only succeeds

¹⁵⁸ “Still, we mortals are also carried past in no less speedy a course; and this prompts me to marvel at our madness in cleaving with great affection to such a fleeting thing as the body, and in fearing lest some day we may die, when every instant means the death of our previous condition. Will you not stop fearing lest that may happen once which really happens every day?” (*Ep.* 58.23).

¹⁵⁹ Elsewhere he notes: “For we are not suddenly smitten and laid low; we are worn away, and every day reduces our powers to a certain extent” (*Ep.* 26.4)

in living during his life but “exists even after his death” (*Ep.* 93.4). Nor does one need to ask regarding such a person how long he lived since “He still lives! At one bound he has passed over into posterity and has consigned himself to the guardianship of memory” (*Ep.* 93.5).

4.4 Conclusion

Egyptian, Jewish, and Greco-Roman texts evince a contested conversation in which conflicting perspectives are offered regarding the proper use of possessions in light of the finality and inevitability of death. Each of these options for how one might employ possessions is shaped and influenced by a particular perspective of death.

The threat posed by the uncontrollable nature of death resulted in various attempts to secure aspects of control. Many such efforts involved the use of wealth and possessions. Enjoyment, generosity, toil, inheritance, and remembering the dead are not merely disparate motifs but interrelated vehicles whereby people sought to find control (and thereby locate and negotiate meaning).

In many of the texts in this chapter, death frequently functions as an opportunity to reframe (and thereby reevaluate) how possessions are understood, valued, and used. As a reframing perspective, death functions rhetorically as a warrant for meaningful living.

This conversation on death and possessions is a possible but not a necessary one. The relative dearth of material in Greco-Roman literature on the intersection of these two motifs demonstrates that one can speak of death apart from possessions and vice-versa. One is not obligated to consider either motif in light of the other. To think of each in light of the other reflects a choice to engage in a specific kind of conversation. The following

chapter will situate Luke's parable of the Rich Fool within this contested sapiential conversation.

5. Luke 12:16-21: Illustrating and Reconfiguring Sapiential Conversations Regarding Death and Possessions

5.1 Introduction

Chapters two, three, and four outlined a spectrum of diverse and often conflicting perspectives in Egyptian, Greco-Roman, and Hellenistic Jewish texts regarding the intersection of death and possessions. The demonstration in these chapters of the highly variegated and contested nature of the conversation regarding death and possessions is important given the tendency of scholarship on the Rich Fool parable to neglect this diversity.¹ The primary aim of this chapter is to situate Luke's parable of the "Rich Fool" and its immediate literary context within this complex sapiential conversation.

Situating the parable within a primarily sapiential conversation marks a methodological departure from most readers who interpret Luke's parable through a "prophetic" lens. Such readers, as was noted in chapter one, conclude that the story is a simple critique of avarice.² These readings neglect, however, the similarities, allusions, and resonances between Luke's parable and sapiential texts. I do not suggest that reading the parable as a sapiential narrative precludes other (e.g., prophetic) interpretations.³

¹ This trend does not appear to be decreasing, as is evident in Snodgrass, *Stories*, 390-93. Snodgrass prefaces his analysis of the Rich Fool parable with a section entitled "helpful primary source material," which includes no less than forty-four primary texts (biblical, Jewish, Greco-Roman, and early Christian). His classification of all these texts under the heading "denunciations of misuse of wealth," misleads the reader into thinking that second temple texts only considered wealth in these terms. Most curious is the inclusion of Qoh 8:15 among these texts that denounce the misuse of wealth.

² So, e.g., Cyprian, *De dominica oratione* 4.20; Cassian, *Institutes*, 7.30; Cyril of Alexandria, *The Gospel of Saint Luke*, 360; Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 141; Crossan, *In Parables*, 83; Donahue, *Gospel*, 177, 79; Malherbe, "Christianization," 132.

³ Contra Metzger, *Consumption and Wealth*, 76, who supposes that one's understanding of the parable "depends entirely upon whether one is working primarily from within Israel's wisdom tradition or the prophetic or later apocalyptic traditions" (cf. 72-73, 79). Metzger cites Sir 11:1-28 as the primary

Indeed, prophetic and sapiential readings of the parable can be compatible, and need not be mutually exclusive.⁴ My aim is to show how reading Luke's parable in concert with sapiential discussions on death and possessions yields different insights than when the parable is read through the primary lens of prophetic texts. Reading the parable as a sapiential narrative draws attention, for example, not only to avarice but also to issues such as the meaningful use of possessions given the uncontrollable aspects of death and the fragility of life.

This chapter argues that Luke's parable and its immediate literary context illustrates, participates in, and reconfigures this sapiential conversation regarding the intersection of death and possessions.⁵ It participates in this conversation by evaluating the relative meaningfulness of six sapiential recommendations for utilizing possessions. Such evaluation is not explicit but rather occurs in Luke's positioning of the parable as a text in dialogue with sapiential traditions and within its current literary context. The parable and its immediate literary context reconfigures this conversation by appropriating certain motifs such as the unjust acquisition of goods and the attempt to exert control in

representative of Israel's wisdom tradition. He assigns the Epistle of Enoch to the prophetic/apocalyptic traditions, and not to wisdom (76).

⁴ On the presence of sapiential motifs in prophetic literature, see Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Wisdom and Law in the Old Testament: The Ordering of Life in Israel and Early Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 99; J. Fichtner, "Jesaja unter den Weisen," *TLZ* 74 (1949): 75-80; J. Lindblom, "Wisdom in the Old Testament Prophets," in *Wisdom in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (VTSup 3; H. H. Rowley Festschrift; eds. M. Noth and D. W. Thomas; Leiden: Brill, 1955): 192-204; J. W. Whedbee, *Isaiah and Wisdom* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971); James M. Ward, "The Servant's Knowledge in Isaiah 40-55," in *Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien* (John G. Gammie et al, eds.; New York: Union Theological Seminary, 1978): 121-136; Samuel Terrien, "Amos and Chokmah," in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage* (eds. B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson; New York: Harper & Bros., 1962): 108-15; W. McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men* (SBT 44; London: SCM, 1965); H. W. Wolff, *Amos the Prophet* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973); R. N. Whybray, "Prophecy and Wisdom," in *Israel's Prophetic Tradition* (P. Ackroyd Festschrift; ed. R. Coggins et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982): 181-99.

⁵ By focusing on *how* Luke engages these texts, I seek to avoid the perils described in Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *JBL* 81 (1962): 1-13. Cf. T. L. Donaldson, "Parallels: Use, Misuse, and Limitations," *EvQ* 55 (1983): 193-210.

the face of death, and adapting these themes to Luke's particular existential, ethical, and theological concerns. It illustrates this conversation by virtue of its form as a narrative and, in particular, as a parable. As a narrative, Luke's parable is markedly different from the more common sapiential forms of propositional discourse. Notable differences accompany this shift in literary form, and one such difference will be explored in chapter five.

I am not arguing that Luke was familiar with every text surveyed in the previous three chapters. But I do propose that he is cognizant of the conversation on death and possessions out of which these texts emerge and with which they are engaged. That Luke is familiar with this conversation is suggested by the number of shared motifs and specific lexical similarities that many of his parables have in common with texts whose focus is the intersection of death and possessions. Nor should Luke's familiarity be surprising since, as was demonstrated in the previous three chapters, this conversation transcended different Mediterranean cultures, occurring in Egyptian, Greco-Roman, and Hellenistic Jewish texts.⁶

This chapter will proceed as follows. After highlighting the prominence of the twinned motifs of death and possessions in Luke 12:13-34, I will demonstrate that Luke uses sapiential language to discuss these motifs. He illustrates the interplay of death and possessions in sapiential terms and with tropes from Jewish wisdom traditions. Second, I will argue that Luke 12:13-34 evaluates the relative meaning of six specific sapiential recommendations for using possessions by framing their use within a broader context of

⁶ Luke's familiarity with this conversation may, furthermore, be due to the occurrence of sapiential motifs in various Jewish texts. Roland Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 221, points out that "the wisdom tradition formed part of the general cultural mix of Israel," and therefore "found expression, even unconsciously, in many works."

death's inevitability, uncertain timing, and potential imminence. Third, I will demonstrate the ways in which Luke 12:13-15 and 12:21 interpret the parable. Fourth, I will show that reading Luke's parable in concert with sapiential texts (as opposed, for example, to prophetic texts) is a heuristic strategy for understanding why the rich man is called a fool. Finally, a comparison of Luke's parable with its parallel version in Thomas (63) will, in addition to highlighting Thomas's interests, further underscore the distinctive features of Luke's parable. Due to the overlap in some of the aforementioned topics, the same exegetical data will at times serve related motifs. We now turn to adduce reasons for reading Luke 12:13-34 as a sapiential discourse.⁷

5.2 Luke 12:13-34: Participating in a Sapiential Conversation On Death and Possessions

5.2.1 Possessions and Death's Inevitability and Uncertain Timing in Luke 12:16-21

Possessions and the inevitability of death are prominent features in Luke's parable of the "Rich Fool." Possessions are referred to throughout the parable, first appearing in the opening line whose subject is "the land" (ἀνθρώπου τινὸς πλουσίου εὐφόρησεν ἡ χώρα) (12:16).⁸ As noted in chapter one, this is the only parable unique to Luke whose subject in the parable's introduction is a "possession" and not a person.⁹ Depicting the land as the subject makes clear its prominent role in the parable but also positions the man and his possessions as beholden to the land. The relationship between the man and

⁷ On Luke 12:13-34 as a unit, see Dupont, *Les béatitudes*, 3:183.

⁸ Translations obscure this nuance when they (mis)render the opening line of the parable as follows: "There was a rich man . . ." See, e.g., Linnemann, *Parables*, 16; Luther's 1545 version; the NAB English translation.

⁹ The subject of four parables (Samaritan, "Prodigal Son", "Unjust Steward", "Lazarus and the Rich Man") is ἀνθρώπος τις (10:30; 15:11; 16:1, 19). Other subjects of the "L" parables include τις γυνή (15:8); τις κριτής (18:2); τις ἐξ ὑμῶν (11:5); and ἄνθρωποι δύο (18:10).

his possessions dominates and drives the parable's plot. The first action in the parable (εὐφόρησεν) is that of the land (12:16), and all of the rich man's plans (12:17-19) are subsequent responses to the land's abundant production.

Each verse of the parable highlights in some way the man's relationship to his possessions.¹⁰ The land's abundant production (12:16) results in the man's declaration that he has nowhere to store his crops (καρπούς) (12:17b). The lack of adequate storage space is the basis for his query regarding what he should do (12:17a), a question whose response constitutes his subsequent plans (12:18-19). He proposes to "pull down his barns" (καθελω̄ μου τὰς ἀποθήκας) and build larger ones (12:18a). These larger barns will be sufficient, he imagines, to store "all the grain and my goods" (πάντα τὸν σῖτον καὶ τὰ ἀγαθὰ μου) (12:18b).¹¹ The imagined "many goods" (πολλὰ ἀγαθὰ)¹² that he will have stored up for "many years" (ἔτη πολλά) (12:19a) is the reason for advising his soul to "rest, eat, drink, be merry" (12:19b). The man's possessions additionally serve as the means by which he will engage in these planned activities of enjoyment and rest.¹³

God's announcement both alludes to the man's possessions (ὃ δὲ ἠτοίμασας) and questions to whom they will belong (τίνι ἔσται) (12:20b).¹⁴ God's speech comprises two halves, the first concerns the rich man's imminent demise ("Fool, on this night they are demanding your life from you") (12:20a), and the second focuses upon the future of

¹⁰ Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, 58, sees goods as the point around which the parable is organized: "In the first stanza goods are *given*. In the central stanza they are *stored*. In the last stanza these same goods are *left*." Emphasis his.

¹¹ Several variants read "fruits" (γενήματα) instead of grain (A, F, M, N, Q, U, W, Γ, Δ, Θ, Λ, Ψ, minuscules 2, 28, 33, 565, 700, 1071, 1424).

¹² A few variants read "fruits" (γενήματα) instead of "goods" (κ*, D, Π). One minuscule (1346) reads "my fruits and my good things."

¹³ A more subtle reference to possessions is the use of τί ποιήσω, a phrase Luke links on seven occasions with the use of possessions (3:10, 12, 14; 10:25; 12:17; 16:3; 18:18).

¹⁴ The referent of the relative pronoun ὃ are the "many goods" (πολλὰ ἀγαθὰ) in 12:19.

the man's goods ("and the things you prepared, to whom will they belong?") (12:20b). Finally, it is possible that the unspecified subject of ἀπαιτούσιν (12:20a) are the "many good things" (πολλὰ ἀγαθὰ) of 12:19a.¹⁵

The man's possessions are consistently depicted in terms that evoke images of abundance. The verb used to describe the land's production, εὐφορέω, connotes an abundant yield.¹⁶ The term χώρα can similarly refer to a vast area such as a "country, region," or "open country."¹⁷ The land's yield is so immense that the man decides to build larger (μείζοντας) barns to contain it (12:18). The man envisions his goods as "many" (πολλά) and as lasting for the same amount (πολλά) of years (12:19). These details corroborate the description of the man as πλούσιος (12:16).¹⁸

Many scholars have observed the prominent role of possessions in the parable.¹⁹ This understanding is reflected in the common classification of the parable under the

¹⁵ So Frank Stagg, *Studies in Luke's Gospel* (Nashville: Convention, 1965), 90-91; R. Wayne Stacy, "Luke 12:13-21: The Parable of the Rich Fool," *Review and Expositor* 94 (1997), 288. The strongest evidence (it seems to me) for this argument is that πολλὰ ἀγαθὰ (12:19) is the nearest antecedent to ἀπαιτούσιν (12:20). Other possibilities that have been proposed for the identification of the referent of ἀπαιτούσιν include God (Fitzmyer, *Luke*, I:974, who reads it as a divine passive), angels (Metzger, *Consumption and Wealth*, 79), and a horde of disgruntled peasants (Beavis, "The Foolish Landowner," 64-66).

¹⁶ Liddell-Scott, 737. Some variants read ἠϋφόρησεν (A, D, G, K, L*, W, Γ, Θ, Λ, Π, Ψ, f⁴³, minuscules 28, 33, 579, 1071) or ἐφόρησεν (minuscule 700). The word is absent in one ninth century uncial (M). The Vulgate renders εὐφορέω here with *uberes fructus*.

¹⁷ Liddell-Scott, 2015; cf. BDAG 1093-94. Luke uses this same term to refer to the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis governed by Philip (Luke 3:1) and the "country" of the Gerasenes (8:26). Charles Hedrick, *Parables as Poetic Fictions: The Creative Voice of Jesus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 154, refers to the rich man's χώρα as a "large country estate."

¹⁸ There is insufficient evidence, however, for the suggestion, so Mary Ann Beavis, "The Foolish Landowner (Luke 12:16b-20)," in *Jesus and his Parables: Interpreting the Parables of Jesus Today* (V. George Shillington, ed.; Edinburgh: T & Clark, 1997), 64, that the man is an urban dwelling absentee landlord.

¹⁹ So Cyprian; Bultmann, *History*, 328; Jeremias, *Parables*, 128; David Wenham, "The Purpose of Luke-Acts: Israel's Story in the Context of the Roman Empire," in *Reading Luke: Interpretation, Reflection, Formation* (Scripture and Hermeneutics Series; vol. 6; ed. Craig G. Bartholomew, et al.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005) 79-103; Eichholz, "Vom Reichen Kornbauern," 180-81.

category of “wealth” or “possessions.”²⁰ Minimal attention, however, has been given to the role of death’s inevitability and uncertain timing. The motif of death’s inevitability and uncertain timing has not been ignored,²¹ but few have identified it as an important element.²²

Yet death’s unpredictable timing and potential imminence play a significant role in the parable. It is the focus of the first half of God’s speech:

ἄφρων, ταύτη τῇ νυκτὶ τὴν ψυχὴν σου ἀπαιτοῦσιν ἀπὸ σοῦ ...

Fool! On this night they are demanding back²³ your life from you ... (12:20a).²⁴

Luke elsewhere uses ψυχή to refer to someone’s life (Luke 6:9; 9:24; 17:33; Acts 7:14; 15:26; 27:10, 22, 37). Nor is it uncommon for second temple Jewish literature to employ ἀπαιτέω + ψυχή to refer to the phenomena of death. The *Testament of Abraham* uses the language of taking Abraham’s ψυχή as a circumlocution for death.²⁵ Wisdom of Solomon uses ἀπαιτέω + ψυχή in its description of death as “the debt demanded of the

²⁰ So Halvor Moxnes, *The Economy of the Kingdom: Social Conflict and Economic Relations in Luke’s Gospel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1988), 146; Snodgrass, *Stories*, 389; Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 140; Christopher M. Tuckett, *Luke* (New Testament Guides; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 96; John Nolland, “The Role of Money and Possessions in the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32): A Test Case,” in *Reading Luke: Interpretation, Reflection, Formation* (Scripture and Hermeneutics Series; vol. 6; ed. Craig G. Bartholomew, Joel B. Green, Anthony C. Thiselton; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 190.

²¹ See Chrysostom, *In Eutropium 2.5*; Athanasius, *Apologia de fuga sua 15*; Calvin, *Commentary*, 148-49; I. H. Marshall, 146, n. 2.

²² Jeremias, *Parables*, 106; cf. 164ff, contends the parable’s original eschatological warning (directed to a “fool obsessed by his possessions and unconscious of the sword of Damocles hanging over his head . . .”) was transformed “into a warning against the wrong use of possessions.” Bornkamm, *Jesus*, 88, suggests the man failed to know “that he must die” and that he did not “understand the folly of his cares, which devour body and soul instead of serving life.” For others who attend to the motif of death, see Bovon, *Saint Luc*, 257; Dupont, *Les béatitudes*, 3:183.

²³ Some variants read ἀιτοῦσιν (p⁷⁵, B, L, Q, minuscules 33, 579).

²⁴ Most read the speech as a reference to the man’s death. See, e.g., Seng, “Reiche;” Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:971; Snodgrass, *Stories*, 398. Some dissent and see the speech as a reference to an eschatological judgment. So Jeremias, *Parables*, 165; David Peter Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor in Luke-Acts* (Linz: Fuchs, 1983), 143; Madeleine I. Boucher, *The Parables* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1981), 127.

²⁵ See, e.g., *T. Ab.* 7:8-9; 19:2-3; cf. 20:12. On one occasion, reference is made to taking Abraham’s πνεῦμα (17:2-3).

life (τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπαιτηθεὶς χρέος)” (Wis 15:8). Diogenes describes death as the departure of the soul (ψυχῆ) from the body (σῶμα) (*Ep.* 39.3, 8-9, 28-29).²⁶ For Philo, death is the point at which the soul becomes separate from the body (*Leg. All.* 1.105-8). When Seneca refers to death, the image he employs most frequently is this departure of the soul from the body.²⁷ Heraclitus describes death as the ascent of the soul (ψυχῆ) from the body into heaven (*Ep.* 5.2, 3).

Moreover, the imminent death of the rich man in Luke’s parable is implied in the second half of God’s speech: “And the things you prepared, to whom will they belong? (ἂ δὲ ἠτοίμασας τίνοι ἔσται)” (12:20b). The divine announcement of the man’s imminent demise is a stark contrast to his previously stated intentions of living for “many years” (cf. 12:18-19). God’s speech reveals these plans to be illusory pretensions of control.

5.2.2 Death and Possessions in the Parable’s Broader Literary Context (Luke 12:4-34)

The importance of reading the parable in light of its immediate literary context is suggested by the numerous lexical and thematic similarities between the two. Extricating the parable from its literary context (12:13-34) obfuscates literary connections such as the motifs of death’s inevitability and possessions.²⁸ A consequence, therefore, of reading the

²⁶ Cited in Abraham H. Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles: A Study Edition* (SBL S 12; Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1977), 165.

²⁷ *Ep.* 70.12; 82.12; cf. 76.25; 86.1; 92.33; 102.22-23; 120.15.

²⁸ For treatments that extricate the parable from its literary context, see Scott, *Hear Then*, 127-40; Jeremias, *Parables*, 164-65, calls 12:13-15 a secondary addition but one which is nonetheless “necessary for the understanding of the parable (cf. 100). He does not treat the subsequent discourse on anxiety. On the advantages of studying parables in their literary context, see Birger Gerhardsson, “If We Do not Cut the Parables Out of Their Frames,” *NTS* 37/3 (1991): 321-35.

parable in light of sapiential texts is drawing attention to the importance of the parable's literary context as a locus of meaning for the parable.

Death and anxiety provide an introductory frame for Luke 12:4-34.²⁹ The specter of death, ubiquitous in Luke-Acts, appears in Jesus' warning not to fear those who can only kill (ἀποκτείνω) the body but to fear the one who is able to kill (ἀποκτείνω) and cast into hell (12:4-5).³⁰ The motif of fear (φοβέομαι), closely linked to anxiety, is mentioned four times in this opening statement (12:4-5), and plays an important role throughout Luke 12:4-34.

The prospect of death is one of the potential consequences of being brought before the synagogues, rulers, and authorities (12:11). The death of a family member is the presumed catalyst for the inheritance at the center of the dispute preceding the parable (12:13-15). Death is later alluded to in the statement regarding the impossibility of adding a cubit to one's lifespan (ἡλικία) (12:25-26a). The brief lifespan of the grass in the field is also stressed: it is alive today and tomorrow cast into the oven (12:28).

²⁹ The shadow of death pervades Luke-Acts. Fourteen characters die (7:12, 15; 8:42, 49; 9:9; 23:32, 33; Acts 1:16-20; 5:5, 10; 7:57-60; 9:37; 12:2, 23; 20:9), as do several others in parables (12:20; 16:22; 19:27; 20:14-16; cf. 16:28). References are made to the deaths of Jesus (Acts 2:23, 36; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 7:52c, 10:39; 13:28; 25:19; cf. 1:3; 4:27; 5:28; 17:3; 26:23), Stephen (Acts 8:1a; 22:20), many others (Luke 2:26, 29, 36-37, 9:59; 11:47-51; 13:1, 4; 17:22; Acts 2:29; 5:36, 37; 7:4, 15, 19, 24, 28, 52b; 13:26), and even animals (Luke 2:24; 8:33). Death is a danger for many characters (Luke 4:28-30; 7:2; 8:23; 13:31; 19:47; 20:19; 22:1-2, 33; cf. 9:22; 17:25; 18:31-34; Acts 5:33; 9:23-24, 29; 12:19; 14:5-6, 19; 16:27-28; 21:31; 22:4, 22; 23:12-15, 21, 27; 25:3; 26:10, 21; 27:10, 42; 28:3-4, 6; cf. Luke 4:34; Acts 28:4). Much of Jesus' teaching focuses on aspects of death (Luke 9:27; 10:19; 12:4-5; 13:3, 5; 20:28-32, 35-38; 21:18, 32), and his ministry consists of delivering people from death or its potential (Luke 7:2, 22; 9:38-42; cf. 4:40; 5:12-15, 18-26; 6:18; 7:21-22; 8:43; 9:11; 17:12). Luke employs an myriad images (Luke 1:79; 2:34b-35; 3:9, 17; 9:23-24, 60; 11:44; 13:34; 17:2, 37; 20:18; 22:20; 23:33) to illustrate death. His vocabulary for death includes six verbs (ἀποθνήσκω, 8:42; 52, 53; 16:22; 20:28, 29, 31, 32, 36; Acts 7:4; 9:37; 21:13; 25:11; θνήσκω, 7:12; 8:49; Acts 14:19; 25:19; τελευτάω, 7:2; Acts 2:29; ἐκψύχω, Acts 5:5, 10; 12:23; κοιμάομαι, Acts 7:60; 13:36; ἀπολύω, Luke 2:29), the adjective νεκρός (7:15, 22; 9:7, 60; 15:24, 32; 16:30, 31; 20:35, 37, 38; 24:5, 46; Acts 3:15; 4:2, 10; 5:10; 10:41, 42; 13:30, 34; 17:3, 31, 32; 20:9; 23:6; 24:21; 26:8, 23; 28:6.), and the noun θάνατος (1:79; 2:26; 9:27; 22:33; 23:15, 22; 24:20; Acts 2:24; 13:28; 22:4; 23:29; 25:11, 25; 26:31; 28:18).

³⁰ Dupont, *Les béatitudes*, 3:183, summarizes 12:2-12 as an "appeal not to fear human hostility."

Death is thus a significant motif in the pericopae preceding and following the parable of the “Rich Fool.” This prevalence of language about death alerts us to the possibility that the parable might also concern itself with this motif. God’s speech confirms that this is the case (12:20).

How Luke speaks about death is just as important as the prominent attention he gives it. In Luke 12:4-34, death is understood as a given reality facing Jesus’ audience. The latter are aware, and seem to be afraid, that they might be killed (12:4). The type of death envisioned here is an uncontrollable event, determined by the will (and violence) of another. Moreover, both people and God are capable of killing (12:4-5). It is this violent and uncontrollable nature that is likely the cause for the fear to which Jesus repeatedly refers (12:4-5). The inability to prolong one’s life further underscores death’s uncontrollable nature. One is powerless in the snare of death’s sovereignty. Death shatters any pretensions of control, as God’s declaration makes clear (12:20a). Finally, death can function as a catalyst of family discord, as it does in the fraternal dispute about the inheritance (12:13-15).

The motif of possessions appears in the episode immediately preceding the parable, an inquiry regarding dividing a family inheritance (12:13-15). The transition between Jesus’ response to this question and the parable is the admonition that life (ζωή) does not consist in the abundance of possessions (ὑπαρχόντων) (12:15b). Specific possessions such as food (τροφή) and clothing (ἔνδυμα) are both explicitly addressed (12:23; cf. 12:22) and alluded to (12:27, 28, 29, 30, 31) in the discourse following the parable (12:22-34). The ravens are cited to illustrate the possibility of not hoarding possessions (12:24). The discourse concludes by recommending an alternative use of

possessions (selling and giving to the poor), describing this use as an everlasting treasure, and arguing that one's heart will be set upon the kingdom if one sells one's goods and gives them to the poor (12:33-34).

Other elements point to an important connection between Luke's parable and its immediate literary context. Five of the words that appear in the parable (12:16-21) are repeated in Luke 12:22-29. These include φάγε (12:19) / φάγητε (12:22, 29); πίε (12:19) / πιήτε (12:29); ψυχή, ψυχήν (12:19, 20) / ψυχῆ, ψυχή (12:22-23); ἀποθήκας (12:18) / ἀποθήκη (12:24); and θεός (12:20; cf. 21) / θεός (12:24, 28). Furthermore, Luke concludes the parable with a reference to θησαυρίζων (12:21), and both θησαυρόν (12:33) and θησαυρός (12:34) appear in the discourse's conclusion (12:22-34). Finally, διὰ τοῦτο ("on this account") in 12:22 indicates a sequential and dependent relationship between the parable and the subsequent discourse (12:22-34). Luke seems to intend that the parable be understood within this broader literary context, and this context deepens the parable's sapiential elements.

5.2.3 Sapiential Elements in Luke's Parable

Reading the parable in light of wisdom texts is further warranted by the presence of sapiential motifs in the parable and its immediate literary context. Several sapiential elements are present in Luke's parable, justifying Bornkamm's description of it as a text "in the style of the wisdom literature."³¹ These sapiential characteristics include, in addition to the intersection of death and possessions, the use of παραβολή to describe

³¹ Bornkamm, *Jesus*, 88, finds it significant that Jesus speaks this parable without referring to apocalyptic images. Bovon, *Saint Luc*, 252, identifies a list of specific elements in the parable that have an "equivalent" in Hebrew and Jewish wisdom.

the narrative of the rich man (12:16a), the man's soliloquy (12:17-19), and the use of the epithet ἄφρων ("fool") (12:20a).

In the Greek Bible, παραβολή appears more frequently in wisdom texts than in any other type of literature.³² The term is associated with other sapiential terms,³³ and with Solomon who is said to have written 3,000 παραβολαί (1 Ki 5:12, LXX). For these and other reasons, παραβολή has been classified as one of the four types of wisdom literature.³⁴ Furthermore, the "Jewish wisdom tradition" is recognized as one of the key components of Jesus' parables.³⁵

Speaking to oneself is a motif that is frequently utilized in sapiential texts.³⁶

Although not distinctive to wisdom literature, this literary device is more prevalent in sapiential texts than other modes of writing. The monologue, for instance, is employed

³² Seventeen of the forty-five uses of παραβολή occur in texts commonly assigned to the wisdom corpus (Psalms, Proverbs, Qoheleth, Ben Sira, and Wisdom). The term also appears in the prophets (12x), the Pentateuch (8x), historical books (5x), Tobit (2x), and once in Daniel.

³³ A wise person (σοφός) can understand a παραβολή (Prov 1:5-6); Qoheleth associates παραβολαί with σοφία, γνώσις, and ἐπιστήμη ("skill") (1:17; cf. 12:9); Ben Sira links παραβολαί both with σοφία and the intelligent (συνετός) person (1:25; 3:29).

³⁴ Maurice Gilbert, *Les cinq livres des Sages: Les Proverbes de Salomon, Le livre de Job, Qohélet ou l'Écclésiaste, Le livre de ben Sira, La Sagesse de Salomon* (Paris: Cerf, 2003). In every case save one, παραβολή in the LXX is a translation of the Hebrew מָשָׁל. For the classification of a παραβολή as a subset of *mashal* see, e.g., Scott, *Hear Then*, 8-19, 35; cf. Snodgrass, *Stories*, 8; Alastair Hunter, *Wisdom Literature* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 33. Hultgren, *Parables*, 6, classifies a parable as a subset of the rabbinic *meshalim*. For the Hebrew term מָשָׁל, see George M. Landes, "Jonah: A *Māšāl*?" in *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien* (John G. Gammie, Walter A. Brueggemann, et al. eds.; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978), 138-46, 151 ft. 8. Landes, 137, 145-46, also discusses the relationship between "parable" and "mashal." On the use of the term παραβολή in Greco-Roman authors, see Marsh H. McCall, *Ancient Rhetorical Theories of Simile and Comparison* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 6-7, 18, 27, 147-55; George A. Kennedy, *Aristotle on Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 180. For a list of some of the occurrences of the word in these authors, see Hultgren, *Parables*, 9; Scott, *Hear Then*, 19-20.

³⁵ So Hultgren, *Parables*, 10-11. He considers eschatology the second major element. Cf. Scott, *Hear Then*, 68. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind the point made by Katherine Dell, 'Get Wisdom, Get Insight': *An Introduction to Israel's Wisdom Literature* (Macon, GA: Smith & Helwys, 2000), 164-65, that there were elements of Jesus' parables that distinguished them from Israelite wisdom traditions.

³⁶ Michael Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium* (Handbuch zum Neuen Testament 5; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 449, highlights some of the parallels in Jewish wisdom literature.

repeatedly in Qoheleth,³⁷ leading one scholar to call the book “the longest sustained monologue in the First Testament,”³⁸ and another to call it the “nearest the Hebrew Bible gets to pure monologue.”³⁹ Relevant to Luke’s parable is Eunny Lee’s observation that Qoheleth “repeatedly speaks of conversing *with his own heart* (1:16; 2:1; 3:17, 18; cf. 16).”⁴⁰ This literary device, the interior dialogue, appears also in non-biblical wisdom literature, and Lee notes that Egyptian sapiential sources offer “the most pertinent parallels.”⁴¹ The soliloquy device appears also in Sir 11:19, a text with an explicit focus on the intersection of death and possessions. This literary device is not distinctive to wisdom literature but it is a characteristic feature of it.

In the Greek Bible, the term ἄφρων is frequently employed in sapiential literature, occurring almost exclusively in wisdom texts. Only four of its 133 uses in the Greek Bible appear in “non-wisdom” texts.⁴² God’s (θεός) only direct speech in Luke-Acts is sapiential in tone.

The discourse following the parable (12:22-34) also incorporates sapiential motifs, and it is not without reason that some refer to its content as “wisdom sayings.”⁴³

³⁷ See, e.g., Roland E. Murphy who notes the presence of this activity in Qoh 1:16-17; 2:1, 15; 3:17 (“The Sage in Ecclesiastes and Qoheleth the Sage,” in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East* [ed. John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990]), 266.

³⁸ Gary D. Salyer, *Vain Rhetoric: Private Insight and Public Debate in Ecclesiastes* (JSOTSup 327; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 176.

³⁹ Fisch, *Poetry with a Purpose*, 158.

⁴⁰ Lee, *Vitality*, 24. See also Jan Assman, “A Dialogue Between Self and Soul: Papyrus Berlin 3024,” in *Self, Soul and Body in Religious Experience* (ed. A.I. Baumgarten et al; SHR 78; Leiden: Brill, 1998).

⁴¹ Lee, *Vitality*, 24, makes specific reference to *The Dispute Between a Man and His Ba* and *The Complaints of Khakheppere-Sonb*. “Reflective wisdom literature of other ancient Near Eastern cultures likewise exploits dialogues (including internal dialogues) to explore contradictory realities and viewpoints” (24, ft. 46).

⁴² The term ἄφρων appears in Psalms, Proverbs, Qoheleth, Job, Wisdom of Solomon, Ben Sira, and Psalms of Solomon. The four “non-wisdom” texts in which it occurs are 2 Sam 13:13; Isa 59:7; Jer 4:22; 17:11.

⁴³ So Bultmann, *History*, 102-03.

The use of nature (birds and flowers) both as a source of theological insight and as a warrant for behavior is characteristic of “nature wisdom,” one particular type of sapiential discourse.⁴⁴ One learns, in this case about God’s benevolence for people, not from divine revelation but by observing the natural environment.⁴⁵

Luke presents Jesus in 12:22-34 as the preeminent teacher of wisdom. The reference to Solomon (12:27) recalls both the most dominant figure in Jewish wisdom,⁴⁶ and the presumed author of Qoheleth and other wisdom texts.⁴⁷ For our purposes, it is relevant that early rabbinic and early Christian sources associate Solomon with parables.⁴⁸ The attitude in Luke 12 toward Solomon is thoroughly critical, comporting

⁴⁴ On “nature wisdom” as one of the five types of sapiential material, see John J. Collins, “Wisdom, Apocalypticism, and Generic Compatibility,” in Leo G. Perdue, Bernard Brandon Scott, and William Johnston Wiseman, *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 168. James L. Crenshaw, “Method in Determining Wisdom Influence Upon ‘Historical’ Literature,” *JBL* 88 (1969), 132, describes “nature wisdom” as one of three types of wisdom material. See also John G. Gammie, “From Prudentialism to Apocalypticism: The Houses of the Sages Amid the Varying Forms of Wisdom,” in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue, eds.; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 481. Origen describes Solomon’s contemplation of nature as an example of his wisdom (*Princ.* 4.3.14).

⁴⁵ So Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 66.

⁴⁶ God is said to have put wisdom (σοφία) in Solomon’s heart (2 Chr 9:23). The king is said to have exceeded all other kings in riches and wisdom (πλούτω καὶ σοφία) (2 Chr 9:22). For links between Solomon and wisdom (σοφία) see 1 Ki 2:35; 5:9, 14, 34; 5:14; 2 Chr 1:10-11; 9:3, 5-7; 22-23; 2 Macc 2:9. Solomon is also linked to φρόνησις (1 Ki 2:35; 5:9; 10:4, 23, 24; 11:41) and is called φρόνιμος and σόφος (1 Ki 2:46).

⁴⁷ The tradition attributes both proverbs (Prov 1:1; 10:1; 25:1) and psalms (72:1; 127:1) to Solomon. He is credited with speaking 3,000 proverbs and 5,000 songs (1 Ki 5:12). Rabbinic sources that attribute Qoheleth to Solomon include Rabbah Leviticus (*LevR* 28.1, Soncino), Song of Songs Rabbah (1.6), and R. Simeon b. Menasia (*Meg* 7a). The latter also assigns 3,000 proverbs to Solomon. Origen and Melito of Sardis attribute Proverbs to Solomon (Eusebius, *HE* 4.26; 6.25; cf. *Princ.* 4.2.4). In Codices Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Alexandrinus, Song of Songs is entitled *Song of Solomon*. For attributions of Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes to Solomon, see Song of Songs Rabbah 1.6; Augustine (*Doct. chr.* 2.8.13), Jerome (*Preface to Samuel and Kings*), and Cassiodorus (*Divine Letters* 12). Origen assigns Ecclesiastes and the book of Wisdom to Solomon (*Princ.* 4.3.14; 4.4.6), but in the Muratorian Fragment it is attributed to Solomon’s friends. Song of Songs Rabbah considers Solomon to be one of the ten authors of the Psalms (4.5). Solomon was also considered the author of Ecclesiastes in the medieval period (e.g., Peter Lombard in the prologue to his *Commentary on the Psalter*).

⁴⁸ ‘Abot de Rabbi Nathan 1; Jerome, *Preface to Samuel and Kings*.

with Luke's critiques of Solomon elsewhere (11:31; Acts 7:47).⁴⁹ Jesus unfavorably compares Solomon's luxurious dress to the beautiful attire of the lilies (12:27).⁵⁰ In the discourse preceding the parable, Jesus calls himself a "greater" (πλεῖον) figure than Solomon (Luke 11:31). His greatness consists specifically in having "more" (πλεῖον) wisdom than Solomon.⁵¹

The comparison of Jesus to Solomon serves an important rhetorical function in 12:22-24. Luke's presentation of Jesus as the preeminent teacher of wisdom gives the latter credibility to speak authoritatively on existential issues such as how one is to live meaningfully. At the heart of 12:22-34 is the interplay of death and possessions, a motif eliciting conflicting perspectives within Hellenistic Judaism. By presenting Jesus as superior to Solomon *in wisdom*, Luke establishes Jesus' perspective on death and possessions to be superior to that of Israel's former king. Because Solomon was traditionally cited as the author of many wisdom books, the supremacy of Jesus' wisdom is simultaneously a superiority of Luke's view of death and possessions over the views in works attributed to Solomon (e.g., Qoheleth).

Luke uses sapiential language to frame his discussion and illustration of death and possessions. The multiple sapiential features in Luke 12:13-34 provide further reason for reading Luke's parable in concert with wisdom texts. These sapiential elements invite us,

⁴⁹ In Stephen's speech, Solomon is identified (and therefore critiqued) as the one who built a house for God (Acts 7:47). Solomon's decision to build the temple is denounced in Acts 7:48 ("Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands ..."). The absence of Solomon in Luke's genealogy may be another slight toward the Israelite king.

⁵⁰ References to Solomon's luxury abound in the Hebrew Bible. See, e.g., 1 Ki 10:10, 14, 21, 26; 1 Chr 29:28; 2 Chr 9:4, 9-10, 13-15, 20, 25-28. On the textual variants in 12:27, see Bruce Metzger, *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament* (4th rev. ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/United Bible Societies, 1994), 136.

⁵¹ So too does the preaching of Jesus exceed that of Jonah (Luke 11:32).

furthermore, to read Luke's parable as a sapiential narrative, and to read Luke 12:13-34 as a sapiential discourse.⁵² Reading the parable in this manner engenders insights that do not result from other (e.g., prophetic) readings. It is to these insights that we now turn.

5.2.4 Appropriating and Reconfiguring Qoheleth and Ben Sira

Luke's parable resonates in multiple ways with the sapiential conversation regarding the intersection of death and possessions. The two most explicit of these resonances are the allusions to Qoh 8:15 and Sir 11:14-19. Three of the four specific intentions of the rich man (ἀναπαύου, φάγε, πίε, εὐφραίνου) (12:19)⁵³ involve the same three Greek verbs used in Qoh 8:15 (φαγῆν, πιῆν, εὐφρανθήναι).⁵⁴ This lexical similarity suggests a possible familiarity on the part of Luke with this saying in Qoheleth.⁵⁵ Luke's probable awareness of Qoheleth is buttressed by the likely knowledge of other second temple Jewish texts (e.g., *I Enoch*, *Wisdom of Solomon*) with Qoheleth.⁵⁶

The multiple parallels between Luke's parable and Sir 11:14-28 invite us to consider the ways in which Luke's parable illustrates and reconfigures this text.⁵⁷

⁵² Walter T. Wilson, *Love without Pretense: Romans 12:9-21 and Hellenistic-Jewish Wisdom Literature* (WUNT 2; Reihe 46; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991). Wilson employs (gnomic) wisdom as a heuristic device for understanding Romans 12:19-21. He suggests that texts "that are not primarily sapiential in character may be understood to take advantage of sapiential themes or conventions" (2).

⁵³ Codex Bezae retains only the first of these four imperatives, omitting "eat, drink, enjoy."

⁵⁴ Some combination of these words occurs in *Epic of Gilgamesh* 10.3; Tob 7:10; *I En.* 97:8-9; Euripides, *Alc.* 788-789; and Menander, *Frag.* 301.

⁵⁵ Contra John Jarick, trans., *Gregory Thaumaturgos' Paraphrase of Ecclesiastes* (SBLSCSS 29; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990), 2, who maintains that, with the possible exception of Rom 8:20, no NT writer "ever betrays any familiarity with Ecclesiastes at all."

⁵⁶ Interest in Qoheleth among second temple Jews is also evident in its appearance in Qumran scrolls (4Q109, 4Q110, 4Q4681).

⁵⁷ So Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, 63. Harrington, *Ben Sira*, 38, cites Luke's parable as a parallel to Sir 11:19.

Specific similarities exist between Luke's parable and Sir 11:14-19.⁵⁸ Both texts share a similar plot outline and four specific lexical parallels: a rich person with many goods (ἀγαθά) speaks in the first person about resting (ἀναπαύω) and feasting (φάγομαι) yet is unaware of the time of his death, an event which will separate him from his goods.

There are also notable distinctions between Luke's parable and Sir 11:14-19. The latter specifies that the rich man leaves his goods "to others" when he dies (Sir 11:19). The fate of the man's goods in Luke's parable, however, is uncertain and is the focus of the final question posed by God (Luke 12:20b). The parable does not assume what is given in Ben Sira and Qoheleth, that death automatically results in the transfer of one's possessions to another.⁵⁹ Nor is the precise intimation of God's question at the close of the parable clear (12:20b). Absent in the parable and its immediate literary context is the kind of lament that characterizes Qoheleth's response to the inherently uncontrollable nature of the transference of one's goods to another. It is possible, as I will argue below, to read God's question to the rich man (12:20b) as a tacit judgment of the man's failure to adopt any of the sapiential recommendations regarding how to use possessions, given death's inevitability.

The dilemma of Ben Sira's rich man is his ignorance regarding the length of his life and, therefore, how much time remains for him to feast on his goods. The possible imminence of his death might serve as a motive for wasting no time in enjoying his

⁵⁸ So Skehan and Di Lella, *Wisdom*, 239; George W. E. Nickelsburg, "Riches, the Rich and God's Judgment in 1 Enoch 92-105 and the Gospel according to Luke," *NTS* 25 (1978-1979): 324-344; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV): Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Anchor Bible 28A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1985), 973; Wright, "Parables on Poverty and Riches," 222; Hultgren, *Parables*, 105, suggests that Luke's parable might be "inspired" by Sir 11:18-19.

⁵⁹ *Contra* Scott, *Re-Imagine*, 95, 131, who imagines that the man's goods will be inherited by the villagers.

goods. As such, the potential lesson would be akin to the frequent recommendations in Qoheleth to enjoy one's goods before death ends this opportunity. The announcement of the man's imminent death in Luke's parable may similarly illustrate the need to enjoy one's goods before one dies (and not merely plan on enjoying them). Such would be the parable's function if it occurred in Qoheleth, namely as an illustration of the need to enjoy one's goods in the present moment before death forever terminates such a possibility. But this is not the point of the parable in Luke's context. God's question concerning the future of the man's goods provides an opportunity to reflect upon the merits of the man's response to the land's production. Luke's parable provides the opportunity to consider and evaluate, in light of death's inevitability, the relative meaning of the rich man's choices regarding the use of his goods. More importantly, the parable's conclusion makes clear that the rich man's plans constitute a failure vis-à-vis his relationship with God (12:21). The parable thus also raises questions concerning the manner in which the man failed to be rich toward God. What is it about the man's plans that make them tantamount to being poor toward God?

The instructions issued in Sir 11:22-28, although not explicitly cited in Luke, are relevant to his parable.⁶⁰ The abundant production of the land, viewed in light of Sir

⁶⁰ The considerable time I spend on the broader context of Qoh 8:15 and Sir 11:14-19 is due to the conviction that these two allusions in the parable are examples of metalepsis. John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), describes metalepsis as a literary reference to a "precursor text," the understanding of which is dependent upon the reader's knowledge of the broader literary context in which the precursor text appears. Richard Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 2, defines metalepsis as "a rhetorical and poetic device in which one text alludes to an earlier text in a way that evokes resonances of the earlier text *beyond those explicitly cited*." Emphasis his. For a fuller discussion of metalepsis and to see its use to understand Paul's interpretation of Scripture, see Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 14-21. David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 2000), 7 n. 26, uses the

11:22, can be understood as a divine blessing. God's appearance and his question concerning the future fate of these fruits might support this view. Is God asking the rich man about the goods because they are a gift that God has given him? Furthermore, the view expressed in Sir 11:22 would suggest that Luke's rich man is pious (εὐσεβής) since he has (presumably) received a divine blessing.

The two sets of negative prohibitions (Sir 11:23-24) are also pertinent to Luke's parable. Ben Sira warns the one who receives a divine blessing against the twin dangers of greed (11:23) and self-sufficiency (11:24):

μη εἴπῃς τίς ἐστίν μου χρεία καὶ τίνα ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν ἔσται μου τὰ ἀγαθὰ
μη εἴπῃς αὐτάρκη μοί ἐστιν καὶ τί ἀπο τοῦ νῦν κακωθήσομαι

Do not say, "What is my need?" and "From this point on what goods will be mine?"

Do not say, "There is enough for me" and "From this point on will I be harmed at all?"⁶¹

Both sets of prohibitions would seem to apply to Luke's rich man. The man's initial response to the land's production reflects the attitude articulated in the first prohibition. He identifies a need (the lack of adequate storage) related to having more goods in the future. Of central concern in his monologue is the role of his goods and his anticipated enjoyment of them. The man's expectation that he will have enough goods "laid up for many years" mirrors the attitude in Ben Sira's second pair of prohibitions. The man

term "evocation," to emphasize "the fact that the scriptural tradition recalled in the use of certain key words may be more profound than the content explicitly noted in the quotations and allusions."

⁶¹ For the neuter τί as an adverb, see Liddell-Scott, 1798.

exhibits no awareness of the possibility that he might be harmed, much less of the ultimate harm that so shortly awaits him.

These echoes and parallels suggest that Luke's parable is influenced by sapiential texts.⁶² This chapter shows *how* the intertextuality between these (and other sapiential) texts and Luke's parable enables and encourages one to read Luke's parable as a sapiential narrative.⁶³

5.2.5 Evaluating Sapiential Recommendations Regarding the Use of Possessions

Luke's parable and its immediate literary context participate in the sapiential conversation on death and possessions by evaluating the relative merits (and meaningfulness) of the six sapiential options for the use of possessions.⁶⁴ Four of the sapiential recommendations regarding the use of possessions in light of death appear in Luke's parable and its immediate literary context. Enjoyment (12:19), recommended throughout Qoheleth,⁶⁵ and in Ben Sira (11:19a-b), is the chief goal envisioned by the

⁶² Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40-66* (Stanford University Press, 1998), 6-7, defines "influence" as the way in which a text "evokes its antecedents, how one author is affected by another."

⁶³ For the term "intertextuality," see Julia Kristeva, *Semiotiké: Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Collections Tel Quel; Paris: Le Seuil, 1969), 113. Sommer, *Prophet*, 6-7, understands intertextuality to refer to the "manifold connections between a text . . . and other texts." Such connections may exist "whether the authors of the texts knew each other or not." Richard B. Hays and Joel B. Green, "The Use of the Old Testament by New Testament Writers," in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* (Joel B. Green, ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 228, define intertextuality as "the notion that every text embodies the interplay of other texts and so exists as a node within a larger literary and interpretive network." For this notion that every text is engaged in an interplay with other texts, see Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1972), 23. Robbins, *Tapestry*, 30, claims that "every text is a rewriting of other texts." For NT intertextual studies, see Kenneth Duncan Litwak, *Echoes of Scripture in Luke-Acts: Telling the History of God's People Intertextually* (JSNTSS 282; London / New York: T & T Clark International, 2005; Gail R. O'Day, "Jeremiah 9:22-23 and 1 Corinthians 1:26-31: A Study in Intertextuality," *JBL* 109/2 (1990): 259-67.

⁶⁴ As mentioned above, Luke's evaluation of these sapiential options is evident in his construction and placement of 12:16-21.

⁶⁵ Qoh 2:24-26; 3:12-13, 22; 5:17-19; 7:14; 8:15; 9:7-10; 11:7-12:7.

rich man in the parable (12:19). The motif of inheritance is explicitly raised in the dispute preceding the parable (12:13-15), and is alluded to in God's question to the rich man regarding the future ownership of the man's goods (12:20b).⁶⁶ The giving of alms, frequently recommended in Ben Sira, is enjoined in Luke's discourse following the parable (12:33). The option of giving to God is framed in the language of "being rich toward God (εἰς θεὸν πλουτῶν)" (12:21), and creating "an unfailing treasure in heaven" (12:33). The two other sapiential options for the use of goods, generosity and hospitality, are not explicitly addressed in 12:13-34. The man's failure to enact, let alone consider, generosity, alms, or hospitality is noteworthy given their prominence both in sapiential texts and in Luke-Acts.⁶⁷ I will consider all six of these sapiential options in my treatment of the parable.

Luke evaluates each of these options by framing them within a broader purview of death's inevitability and life's fragility. Central to this evaluation is the placement of these ways of using possessions within the context of the death's uncertain timing and its potential imminence. These motifs (enjoyment, inheritance, giving to God, generosity, hospitality, alms) thus play an important rhetorical function in Luke's parable and its immediate literary context. Luke's parable and its immediate literary context illustrates whether, and how, possessions can be employed meaningfully within the specific purview of death's uncertain timing and potential imminence. Since the potential

⁶⁶ J. D. Derrett, "The Rich Fool: A Parable of Jesus Concerning Inheritance," *Heythrop Journal* 18 (1977): 131-51.

⁶⁷ I consider alms and hospitality two specific types of generosity. Alms refers to the giving or sharing with the poor. Hospitality consists of providing help (whether in the form of goods, money, or provisions) to someone, usually a traveler. This latter act often occurs in one's own home.

meaning of Luke 12:13-34 is related to its broader literary context, I will also attend to the ways in which these sapiential recommendations are treated in Luke-Acts.⁶⁸

5.2.5.1 Enjoyment

The legitimacy of enjoyment as a meaningful enterprise is contested in sapiential discussions of death and possessions. On the one hand, enjoyment is recommended as a fitting response to the uncertainties associated with death. Enjoyment is Qoheleth's primary recommendation in response to the uncontrollable aspects of death.⁶⁹ Syriac Menander joins Qoheleth in proposing enjoyment because of the inability to use goods after death (*Sy. Men.* 368-76).⁷⁰ Egyptian texts recommend enjoying possessions in light of death's inevitability,⁷¹ its uncertain timing,⁷² negative depictions of the afterlife,⁷³ and the inability to enjoy goods after death.⁷⁴ Lucian is able to speak approvingly of eating (ἐσθίω) and drinking (πίνω), and he associates such activity with the happiest of deaths (*Par.* 57). Lucian critiques those who fail to enjoy their goods (*Char.* 17; *Cat.* 8, 17; *Tim.* 13-14). Other texts critique enjoyment, frequently associating it with luxury, indulgence, or gluttony. The Harper's song from the tomb of Neferhotep explicitly repudiates the exhortation to enjoy life (*AEL* III:115-16). *I Enoch* associates "eating and drinking" with

⁶⁸ Brian Blount, *Cultural Interpretation: Reorienting New Testament Criticism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), viii: "Texts do not have 'meaning.' Instead, they have 'meaning potential.'"

⁶⁹ Qoh 2:24a; 3:12, 22a; 5:17; 8:15; 9:7-10; 11:8-9.

⁷⁰ Syriac Menander, T. Baarda. "The Sentences of the Syriac Menander," in Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*, 2.583-606.

⁷¹ *The Dispute Between a Man and His Ba* (*AEL* I:165, 168); Statue of Nebneteru (*AEL* III:18-22); Instruction of Ankhsheshonq 8.7-8, 13-14).

⁷² Admonitions of Ipuwer (*AEL* I:157, 160).

⁷³ Stela of Taimhotep (*AEL* III:62).

⁷⁴ Petosiris (inscription 127; *AEL* III:52); Tomb of King Intef (*AEL* I:196-97).

sinners (102.8-11). Seneca and Diogenes critique enjoyment, especially in its extreme forms.⁷⁵

Luke joins sapiential texts in evaluating the relative merit and meaning of enjoyment. A primary intent of the rich man is to utilize his possessions for the purpose of enjoyment (12:19). His proposed enjoyment is articulated by an allusion to Qoh 8:15.⁷⁶ One can, however, speak more precisely about how Qoh 8:15 functions in Luke's parable.⁷⁷ The rich man's stated intention (12:19) is an endorsement of Qoheleth's specific recommendation to eat, drink, and be merry (Qoh 8:15; cf. 5:17). The rich man's plan (12:19) also coheres with the general admonitions regarding enjoyment that pervade Qoheleth (2:24-25; 3:12, 22a; 5:17; 8:15; 9:7-10; 11:8-9) and appear in Ben Sira (14:14-17). In such recommendations, possessions are to be used for the purpose of enjoyment. The man's plans to utilize his goods as vehicles of enjoyment represent the actualization of these recommendations.

However, the relationship in the parable between death's inevitability and the enjoyment of possessions is fundamentally different than that in Qoheleth and Ben Sira. In these latter two texts, death functions as the principal warrant for enjoying one's possessions.⁷⁸ The uncontrollable facets of death (e.g., its timing and destruction of one's being) lead Qoheleth to recommend that one enjoy one's goods. Qoheleth and Ben Sira recommend enjoying one's possessions *because of* their respective understandings of

⁷⁵ Diogenes, *Ep.* 39; Seneca, *Ep.* 9.20; 51.5, 8; 74.14-15; 95.33; 110.10; 114.23.

⁷⁶ Eichholz's argument, *Gleichnisse*, 187, that Qoheleth's statements on enjoyment are not apt parallels to the parable, due to the difference in their respective understandings of death, is not persuasive.

⁷⁷ Observations that Qoh 8:15 is a parallel to Luke 12:19 have yielded scant insight into the relationship between the two texts. Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden*, II:611-12, is one of the first to note that each text shares the same three Greek verbs, but he does not explain how this observation illuminates the parable.

⁷⁸ Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 144, finds advice in Ben Sira and Qoheleth to let the "imminent threat" of death "spur them on to enjoyment of life's innocent pleasures . . ."

death. Egyptian texts likewise recommend enjoying possessions because of the numerous uncertain and uncontrollable aspects of death.⁷⁹

The plans of the rich man, however, are not (ostensibly) rooted in any particular perception of death. On the contrary, he intends to enjoy life despite any regard or acknowledgement of his own mortality. In sapiential texts surveyed in chapters two and three, the particular recommendations regarding the use of possessions resulted from specific perceptions of death. The rich man evinces no awareness of his inevitable death, and this lack of consciousness regarding his mortality constitutes a sharp contrast with the declaration of his death in the divine address (12:20a).

Furthermore, the character in the parable only anticipates an enjoyable future. That this future never materializes demonstrates his *investment* (both economically and psychically) in the future. His focus on the future is evident in the use of seven verbs in the future tense (ποιήσω,⁸⁰ συνάξω,⁸¹ ποιήσω,⁸² καθελω,⁸³ οἰκοδομήσω, συνάξω, ἐρω). Only one of the eight verbs he uses is not in the future tense.⁸⁴ These verbs highlight the imagined and anticipatory nature of the man's acts. The energy he expends dwelling upon the future necessitates some level of detachment from his present. The focus in God's speech on the imminent present is a stark contrast to the man's imagined future existence. Two elements in God's speech underscore the present imminence of the

⁷⁹ *Pap. In.* 17.4-7, 11-15; *Dispute Between a Man and His Ba* (*AEL* I:165, 168); Statue of Nebneteru (*AEL* III:18-22); Instruction of Ankhsheshonq 8.7-8, 13-14); Admonitions of Ipuwer (*AEL* I:157, 160); Stela of Taimhotep (*AEL* III:62); Petosiris (inscription 127; *AEL* III:52); Song from the Tomb of King Intef (*AEL* I:196-97).

⁸⁰ It is possible to consider this first use of ποιήσω as an aorist subjunctive.

⁸¹ Some variants have instead the aorist active infinitive συνάξει (W*, Λ, f⁴³).

⁸² This word, along with much of 12:18 (including οἰκοδομήσω), is absent in p⁴⁵. Minuscule 33 only has the first letter (π) of this word.

⁸³ P⁴⁵ lacks the first four letters of this word.

⁸⁴ The exception is ἔχω (12:17). The five verbs in 12:19 are not in the present tense, but all of these occur in the man's imagined future.

man's death. The demanding of the man's life (ἀπαίτουσιν), in contrast to the man's imagined actions, is a present activity. Moreover, this act will occur (or is already occurring) "on *this* (ταύτη) night" (12:20a).⁸⁵ God's speech not only shatters the man's assumption that he wields control over his destiny, but also pulls him out of his imaginary future into the reality of the present.⁸⁶

The man's removal from acting in the present marks a significant departure from Qoheleth for whom one's present was one of the few (if only) guarantees one was given. The man's plans indicate a failure to heed the warning, pervasive in sapiential texts, that the future lies outside the sphere of one's control.⁸⁷ The uncertain nature of the future is one of the reasons Qoheleth recommends enjoying goods in the present (Qoh 3:22). The man's plans to enjoy his goods in the future diverge from the plans of Ben Sira's rich man who intends to eat from his goods "now" (νῦν / הַעַתָּה), rather than in a distant imagined future (Sir 19:11a-b). Qoheleth advises enjoying goods in one's youth since old age curtails one's ability to do so (11:8-9; 12:1-5). The divine announcement of the man's death serves as an illustration of this sapiential emphasis on the inability to predict the future with any degree of certainty.

The man's focus on the future highlights another difference between his actions and Qoheleth's advice. Although the man plans to enjoy his goods, he never is able to do so. The closest he comes to enjoying his goods is the planning of such enjoyment. This is not a trivial distinction, because sapiential texts regularly impugn those who spend time

⁸⁵ Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden*, II:612, cites the present tense of ἀπαίτουσιν as evidence for the "picture (*Vorstellung*) of the immediate execution (*Vollzuges*)" of the rich man.

⁸⁶ For Dupont, *Les béatitudes*, 3:185, the man's *erreur fatale* is his failure to have reckoned with the "present life." Dupont roots the man's failure to give alms with this detachment from his present.

⁸⁷ See, e.g., Jas 4:13-16; Seneca, *Ep.* 99.9.

planning for a future that they cannot control. Seneca describes people for whom “... the search for the superfluous means a great outlay of time” and who “have gone through life merely accumulating the instruments of life.” Of these people “there is none whose life does not look forward to the morrow ... such persons do not live, but are preparing to live. They postpone everything.” Seneca’s reflection can be applied to the rich man in Luke’s parable: “Even if we paid strict attention, life would soon get ahead of us; but as we are now, life finds us lingering and passes us by as if it belonged to another, and though it ends on the final day, it perishes every day” (*Ep.* 45.12-13).

Especially relevant to Luke’s parable is Seneca’s claim that the person who delays life in this manner “cannot stand prepared for the approach of death if he has just begun to live” (*Ep.* 23:10-11). The rich man embodies Seneca’s observation that some people “only begin to live when it is time for them to leave off living” (*Ep.* 23.10-11). Lucian, in particular, critiques those who fail to enjoy their wealth or goods. Some people collect (συναγείρω) riches but die before being able to enjoy (ἀπολαύω) them (*Char.* 17). One man groans because he regrets his failure to enjoy (ἀπολαύω) his money before dying (*Cat.* 17). Lucian faults the tyrant Megapenthes who buries his treasure (θησαυρός) rather than enjoying or sharing it with others (*Cat.* 8). The personification of riches complains that her owners, instead of enjoying (ἀπολαύω) her, lock her up with bolts, keys, and seals (*Tim.* 13-14).

Interpreters who identify the man as a hedonist often overlook that he does not actually engage in any of his planned acts of enjoyment.⁸⁸ The man only *intends* to enjoy

⁸⁸ To regard the man’s plans as a reflection of Qoheleth’s recommendation is to call into question the identification, by Malherbe, “Christianization,” 133, et al, of the man as a hedonist. Others had also

his goods, and thus fails to apply this specific counsel of Qoheleth and Ben Sira.⁸⁹ The inability to enjoy his goods (apart from his imagination) is a failure to adopt Qoheleth's most consistent advice regarding the meaningful use of possessions in light of death.⁹⁰

The strongest argument against those who identify the man as a hedonist is the absence of any explicit critique of the man's intent to "rest, eat, drink, enjoy" within the parable itself. God's speech (12:20) critiques the man's plans, but there is no overt rejection of the man's plans to *enjoy* his goods:⁹¹

ἄφρων, ταύτη τῆ νυκτὶ τὴν ψυχὴν σου ἀπαιτοῦσιν ἀπο σοῦ·

ἅ δὲ ἡτοιμάσας, τίμι ἔσται;

Fool! On this night they are demanding your life from you;

And the things you prepared – to whom will they belong?

labeled the man a hedonist (e.g., Schlatter, *The History of the Christ*, 166-70), but Malherbe has been influential and many (Wright, "Poverty and Riches," 222; Hock, "The Parable," 181; Tannehill, *Luke*, 206; Metzger, *Consumption and Wealth*, 83) have followed his lead in viewing the man in like manner. Scott, *Re-Imagine*, 130, on a variation of the hedonist theme, sees the man's speech as a sign that he is an Epicurean. Metzger, *Consumption and Wealth*, 77-78, roots his argument for hedonism in the fact that two of the four verbs in 12:19 are in the present tense (ἀναπαύου, εὐφραίνου), and therefore "hint not at sporadic but ongoing festivity." He reads too much into the tense of these verbs, as he does when he avers, on the basis of the use of aorist verbs in Qoh 8:15, that there is "no indication that Qoheleth recommends such celebration with regularity" (77). Metzger also sees the verb ἀναπαύου as a sign of hedonism, especially since this word is absent in Qoh 8:15 and Tob 7:10. For a rejection of characterizations of the rich man as a hedonist, see Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden II*:611; Hedrick, *Parables*, 150; Dupont, *Les béatitudes*, 3:185.

⁸⁹ Metzger, *Consumption and Wealth*, 80, thinks it likely that the man *does* enact his plan of enjoyment. In order to read the parable this way, Metzger imagines that an interval of several months occurs between the man's plans (12:19) and God's announcement (12:20). Metzger's primary motive in reading the parable in this manner appears to be his desire to make sense of 12:20, which he reads as God's punishment of the rich man.

⁹⁰ He also fails to abide by the Talmudic instruction: "Everyone must give an account before God of all good things one saw in life and did not enjoy" (y. *Qidd.* 4:12).

⁹¹ So Metzger, *Consumption and Wealth*, 83.

Moreover, if Luke intended to depict the man as a hedonist, he would have likely used specific terms (e.g., ἡδοναί, ἡδονή) associated with such activity.⁹² Luke does use the latter word pejoratively to critique a lifestyle (“the worries and riches and pleasures of life”) (8:14) that is more congruent with hedonism than the plans of the rich fool.

A further difficulty posed for those who maintain the rich man is a hedonist whose plans to enjoy his goods are indicted in the parable is Luke’s acceptance (both tacit and explicit) of Qoheleth’s recommendation to eat, drink, and enjoy. Luke depicts much of Jesus’ teaching within a symposia setting. Not once does Jesus critique the feasting and drinking that accompanies such activities.⁹³ Jesus is rather depicted as partaking in the eating and drinking at these events.

Luke more broadly endorses the activities of eating and drinking.⁹⁴ Jesus describes his Father’s kingdom as one in which people will eat and drink (Luke 22:29-30). Much of the critique leveled at Jesus concerns his eating or that of his disciples. The latter are asked why they “eat and drink (ἐσθίετε καὶ πίνετε)” with tax collectors and sinners (5:30). Jesus is questioned as to why his disciples “eat and drink (ἐσθίουσιν καὶ πίνουσιν)” when those of John fast (Luke 5:33). A catalyst for one of the controversy episodes is the picking and eating (ἤσθιον) of grain on the Sabbath by Jesus’ disciples (Luke 6:1). In their defense, Jesus cites the precedent of David who ate (ἔφαγεν) the

⁹² The use of the term to describe eating and drinking in certain contexts (e.g., Tob 7:10) suggests that eating and drinking could be hedonistic depending on how one engaged in it. Though see Metzger, *Consumption and Wealth*, who contends this reference in Tobit does not connote hedonism since it is “spoken in the context of a special celebration before marriage and not offered as a way of life to be pursued with regularity.” For pejorative uses of the noun in the NT (the verb does not occur), see Jas 4:1, 3; Tit 3:3; 2 Pet 2:13.

⁹³ Luke 5:29-39; 7:36-50; 11:37-54; 14:1-15:32.

⁹⁴ Luke also endorses enjoyment (see esp. Luke 15:23, 24, 29, 32). Luke is the only canonical gospel that reflects an interest in the activity of enjoyment (εὐφραίνω). The term does not appear in Matthew, Mark, or John. Eight of its fourteen uses in the NT are in Luke-Acts.

bread in the temple and gave the same to his companions (Luke 6:4). Jesus, in contrast to John, came “eating and drinking (ἔσθίων καὶ πίνων)” (7:34a). Jesus acknowledges that this behavior resulted in accusations that he was a “glutton and drunkard” (7:34b). The disciples are to eat and drink (ἔσθιόντες καὶ πίνοντες) what is given to them when in others’ homes (10:7). They are in fact to “eat (ἔσθίετε) the things set before” them whenever they are received into a town (10:8). A reader of the Rich Fool parable has not been prepared by the narrative to think negatively of eating and drinking. Indeed, the primary critique of eating and drinking has been offered by Jesus’ opponents. Jesus’ sole critiques are aimed at those who are “full now (ἐμπεπλησμενοι νῦν)” (6:25) and those who are anxious about what they will eat (12:22, 29).⁹⁵

In light of sapiential texts, the man’s planned enjoyment is deficient because it is postponed and not actualized, and is not a response to any apparent awareness of his own mortality.⁹⁶

5.2.5.2 Inheritance

Luke’s parable and its immediate literary context participate in a contested sapiential conversation regarding the legitimacy and meaningfulness of an inheritance. On the one hand, many texts endorse the development of a will or testament for the purpose of ensuring the transfer of one’s goods. Proverbs considers leaving an

⁹⁵ See also 12:45 where Jesus critiques those who eat, drink, get drunk and beat other slaves. I take 17:27-28 not as a critique of eating, drinking, marriage, buying, selling, planting, and building but as a general description of human activity.

⁹⁶ The rich man’s enjoyment is inadequate in light of Luke’s gospel because it is envisioned as a solitary act apart from community.

inheritance to one's heirs to be the act of a good person (Prov 13:22).⁹⁷ *Testament of Abraham* presents the construction of a will and distribution of one's possessions as a meaningful act given the potential imminence of death.⁹⁸ Ben Sira offers advice on issuing an inheritance,⁹⁹ and, so I argued, proposes commitment to one's testament as a meaningful act in the face of death's uncertain timing. Giving an inheritance is considered a proper use of possessions in many ancient Egyptian texts.¹⁰⁰

Qoheleth and Lucian, on the other hand, highlight the fragile and undependable aspects of an inheritance. Whereas Qoheleth focused upon the inability to control who would inherit one's goods,¹⁰¹ Lucian's *Dialogues* draw attention to the uncontrollable aspects faced by potential heirs of an inheritance. Greed causes characters in the *Dialogues* to scheme to inherit the property and riches of wealthy individuals. Such greed leads to the deaths of those schemed against and the schemers themselves.¹⁰² Plutarch inveighs against the practice of misers providing inheritances to heirs because such wealth, rather than being enjoyed, is perpetually preserved (φυλάσσω) (*Cupid. divit.* 7).¹⁰³

⁹⁷ According to the MT. The LXX reads: "A good person will inherit sons of sons."

⁹⁸ *T. Ab.* 1:4-5; 4:11; 8:11; 15:1, 7.

⁹⁹ *Sir* 9:6; 22:23; 33:23; 42:3.

¹⁰⁰ Inheritances were typically passed along to one's sons, sometimes only to the firstborn. See, e.g., the "Memphite Theology," an Old Kingdom Pyramid text (*AEL* I:52-53); "the Story of Sinuhe," a Middle Kingdom prose tale (*AEL* I:231). The act of handing over one's possessions often occurred when one was in "old age and hear his death . . ." (*AEL* I:231). The Instruction of Prince Hardjedef notes the importance of providing for the funerary priest, even instructing that one "prefer him even to your [heir]" (*AEL* I:59).

¹⁰¹ *Qoh* 2:18-21; 5:12-13. Plutarch also mentions the likelihood of one's inheritance being taken by "some outsider, an informer or tyrant" (*Cupid. divit.* 7).

¹⁰² *Dial. mort.* 15.1-2; 16.1, 3-4; 17.1; 18; 21.1, 3. Scheming to acquire an inheritance is the central preoccupation of four successive dialogues (*Dial. mort.* 15, 16, 17, 18).

¹⁰³ Plutarch likens such people to "earthen pipes" since they convey wealth to others and take nothing for themselves (*Cupid. divit.* 7).

Luke's interest in this sapiential conversation regarding inheritance is evident in 12:13-15 and two of his parables.¹⁰⁴ In Luke 12, he juxtaposes an individual seeking his share of an inheritance (12:13) with a man about to die who (apparently) has not left an inheritance to anyone (12:20). The former episode (12:13-15) does not appear to offer any positive evaluation of the potential benefit of an inheritance.¹⁰⁵ As in Lucian's *Dialogues*, Luke depicts a case in which an inheritance engenders a familial conflict.¹⁰⁶ The fraternal dispute in Luke 12 over the inheritance reflects a concern that appears elsewhere in Luke. Conflict over an inheritance is a chief source of the elder brother's disdain regarding the father's treatment of his younger brother (Luke 15:11-32). In another parable, the desire for an inheritance is the primary motive for the murder of the intended recipient of the inheritance (Luke 20:9-16).¹⁰⁷

Jesus' response to the brother's request signals a reluctance to participate in the fraternal dispute (12:14).¹⁰⁸ Implicit in Jesus' rejoinder is a lack of enthusiasm for pursuing one's share of inheritance as a meaningful enterprise. Like Lucian's *Dialogues*, Luke appears to identify greed (πλεονεξία) as the motive for the brother's question for his share of the inheritance (12:15).¹⁰⁹

The parable depicts a man who apparently has not prepared a testament or will. This neglect is implied in the question God puts to the rich man: "the things you prepared

¹⁰⁴ See the Father and Two Sons (15:11-32) and the Vineyard Tenants (20:9-16).

¹⁰⁵ For a thorough analysis of the textual transmission of this episode see T. Baarda, "Luke 12, 13-14: Text and Transmission from Marcion to Augustine," in idem, *Early Transmission of Words of Jesus: Thomas, Tatian, and the Text of the New Testament* (Amsterdam: Boekhandel/Utgeverij, 1983), 117-72; originally published in *Judaism, Christianity and other Graeco-Roman Cults* (Jacob Neusner, ed.; Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty, vol. 1; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 107-62.

¹⁰⁶ Hock, "The Parable," 183, situates the brother's question within Jewish inheritance laws.

¹⁰⁷ Lucian speaks of the greed of heirs resulting in failed murder plots (*Dial. mort.* 17.4; cf. 21.3).

¹⁰⁸ μεριστήν is a hapax legomenon in the NT. For textual variants related to this term, see Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 135.

¹⁰⁹ *Dial. mort.* 15.1; 16.3; 21.1.

– whose will they be?” (12:20c). Like Abraham in *T. Ab.*, Luke’s rich man demonstrates no awareness of the potential imminence of his death, nor does he enact any plans for his demise such as constructing a testament or will. If, as in *T. Ab.*, constructing a testament necessitates facing one’s mortality, then the rich man’s apparent lack of a will might suggest that he has neglected to reflect upon the possibility of his own death.

Wills and testaments played an important function in Luke’s Greco-Roman society.¹¹⁰ Fitzgerald contends that a will or testament revealed the true content of a person’s character.¹¹¹ He cites a statement from Pliny the Younger (*Ep.* 8.18.1) who remarks that people believed a will to be a mirror (*speculum*) of a person’s character (*morum*).¹¹² Hellenistic moralists and Roman jurists understood the making of a will to be a “moral obligation.”¹¹³ If this were the case then to die without making a will would constitute a significant breach of what was expected, especially from one with the (apparent) quantity of possessions held by this man.

Luke’s parable and its immediate literary context represent one of many sapiential views regarding the legitimacy of establishing an inheritance as one way to handle one’s possessions in light of death’s inevitability. Whereas Qoheleth viewed an inheritance as undependable, Luke seems to view it as a potentially meaningless venture. It is bankrupt in its ability to provide meaning because the amassing of goods fails to enhance life (12:15). Luke joins Lucian in highlighting the conflict inheritances produce. It leads to

¹¹⁰ See John T. Fitzgerald, “Last Wills and Testaments in Graeco-Roman Perspective,” in *Early Christianity and Classical Culture: Comparative Studies in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (ed. by John T. Fitzgerald, et al.; Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2003) 637-72; Edward Champlin, *Final Judgments: Duty and Emotion in Romans Wills, 200 B.C.—A.D. 250* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

¹¹¹ Fitzgerald, “Last Wills,” 643.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 640.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 644.

fraternal strife (12:13; cf. 15:11-32) and, in a later parable, to both the conspiracy and commitment of a murder (20:14). Luke thus differs from *Testament of Abraham* in which the making of a testament was presented, in addition to hospitality, as a primary way of finding meaning within the context of the uncontrollable facets of death.

5.2.5.3 Generosity

Nor does the rich man share his goods with others, a recommendation regarding possessions that appears in sapiential texts and one that is also suggested and illustrated in Luke-Acts. Ben Sira recommends generosity because of death's uncertain timing and one's inability to enjoy possessions after death (14:8-13). Egyptian texts also suggest that the uncertain timing of death is a reason for sharing possessions generously with others.¹¹⁴ Pseudo-Phocylides, a first-century Hellenistic Jewish wisdom text, cites both one's mortality and the inability to take goods into the afterlife as warrants for being generous: "If you are rich, do not be sparing; remember that you are mortal (θνητός). One cannot bring one obol or money into Hades" (109-110).¹¹⁵

Generosity with others is consistently recommended and practiced throughout Luke-Acts. Generosity with one's possessions is modeled by literary characters, both in the narrative of Luke-Acts (8:1-3) and in Lukan parables such as the Samaritan (10:30-37). John the Baptist prescribes the generous sharing of clothing and food as the answer to the audience's first query regarding what they should do to avoid judgment (3:11).

¹¹⁴ See, e.g., Instruction of Ankhsheshonq (12.5, 17-18; *AEL* III:168-69).

¹¹⁵ For a first century date for Pseudo-Phocylides, see P. W. van der Horst, "Pseudo-Phocylides Revisited," *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 3 (1988) 15; Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 158. Wilson, *Sentences*, 7, places it between 100 BCE – 100 CE. On the sapiential nature of Pseudo-Phocylides, see Wilson, *Mysteries of Righteousness*, 4-5. Wilson, *Sentences*, 10, classifies the work as a "gnomic poem."

Acts depicts the community of believers engaged in various aspects of generosity.

Among these is the daily distribution (τῇ διακονίᾳ τῇ καθημερινῇ) to widows (Acts 6:1-7). The disciples decide to send relief (διακονίαν πέμψαι) to believers in Judea in anticipation of a famine (Acts 11:28-30). Upon his departure from the island, natives supply Paul and his companion(s) with provisions (Acts 28:10).

When read within the twin context of sapiential texts and Luke-Acts, the man's lack of generosity is noteworthy. The lack of generosity is especially significant given the claim that the man's storage of goods was "for himself" (ἑαυτῷ) (12:21), and the subsequent proposal to give alms (12:33).

5.2.5.4 Giving to God

Neither does the rich man give his goods to God, one potential type of generosity that Ben Sira enjoins in the face of death's uncertain timing (Sir 14:11b). Luke explicitly addresses this possibility of giving possessions to God in the parable's conclusion (12:21). Although rich (πλούσιος, 12:16), the man has failed to be "rich towards God" (εἰς θεὸν πλουτῶν) (12:21). Moreover, his poverty toward God is linked with his "storing up for himself" (12:21).

What, however, does being rich toward God entail? I will argue below that the man's failure to be rich toward God consisted in the selfish orientation of his storage of goods, and that Luke proposes alms as the positive alternative for how one might give to, and be rich toward, God (12:21, 33; cf. 18:22).

5.2.5.5 Hospitality

Hospitality, another specific type of generosity, is also neglected by the rich man.¹¹⁶ The absence of hospitality (or its intention), coupled with the lack of generosity, corroborates the claim in 12:21 that the man's storage of goods was "for himself." The neglect of hospitality is significant, in light of the emphasis given to this virtue in sapiential texts and Luke-Acts. Hospitality was the chief virtue exemplified by Abraham in *T. Ab.*

Offering hospitality to others is a frequent occurrence in Luke-Acts. Luke does not employ the technical term for hospitality (φιλοξενία), but he depicts several episodes in which it is practiced.¹¹⁷ Characters enact hospitality by welcoming others into their homes, and providing food for them.¹¹⁸ It is not insignificant that the final sentence of Acts describes Paul as being in the habit of practicing hospitality by welcoming (ἀπεδέχετο) all who came to him (Acts 28:30).

Relevant to the claim in 12:21 that the rich man is not "rich toward God," is the function of hospitality (or its neglect) in Luke as a criterion by which people will be

¹¹⁶ Andrew Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels: Early Christian Hospitality in Its Mediterranean Setting* (NTM 8; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005), 6, defines hospitality in the ancient Mediterranean as "the act of assisting one or more travelers for a limited amount of time. This assistance essentially consisted of provisions and protection."

¹¹⁷ See, e.g., Luke 10:38-42; 11:5-8; 19:1-10 (cf. Luke 10:7); Acts 16:34; 17:7; 28:14, 30. For situations where people neglect to show hospitality, see Luke 9:35; 10:10.

¹¹⁸ Levi's first act as a follower of Jesus, after rising and leaving everything, is to provide a great banquet for him (5:29). Jesus is also invited into the home of a Pharisee where he reclines (κατακλίνω) at table (7:36). Jesus later accuses this Pharisee of showing him a lack of hospitality, compared to that shown by the woman who anoints him (7:44-46). Another Pharisee invites Jesus to dine with him and Jesus also reclines (ἀναπίπτω) at his table (11:37). Characters who welcome (ὑποδέχομαι) others include Martha and Mary (10:38-42) and Zacchaeus (19:1-10). Hospitality also figures prominently in the parable of the Friend at Midnight (11:5-8). Hospitality is also practiced by characters in Acts. The jailer brings Paul and Silas into his home and feeds them (Acts 16:34); Jason entertains (ὑποδέχομαι) Paul and Silas (Acts 17:6-7); Publius welcomes (ἀναδέχομαι) and hospitably entertains (φιλοφρόνως ἐξένισεν) Paul for three days (Acts 28:7). Believers in Rome invite Paul to stay with them for a week (Acts 28:14).

judged.¹¹⁹ Jesus' instructions regarding banquet hospitality describe a positive judgment for those who show hospitality to the marginalized (14:12-14). Inviting the poor, crippled, lame, and blind to a banquet will result in being blessed (μακάριος) and repaid (ἀνταποδίδωμι) at the resurrection of the just (δίκαιος) (Luke 14:12-14).¹²⁰ One is repaid at the resurrection precisely because the invitees are incapable of repayment.¹²¹ An alternative social community is envisioned, one based not on reciprocity but on the principle articulated in Luke 6:32-36. The man's storage of goods "for himself" is incriminating given Luke's understanding of the meal as a social event, one providing an opportunity to include the marginalized.

The rich man's lack of hospitality is noteworthy given the parallels between the respective descriptions of this man and Abraham in *T. Ab.* Both men are "rich" (πλούσιος) (*T. Ab.* 1:5; 2:11; cf. Luke 12:16), and each owns a "field" (χώρα) (*T. Ab.* 2:1, 7-8; cf. Luke 12:16). Abraham is consistently portrayed as one who "welcomed (ἔδέχετο) everyone" (*T. Ab.* 1:2; cf. 2:2).¹²² Moreover, God and Michael give Abraham special treatment because of his hospitality. His hospitality is a reason for his death being delayed (*T. Ab.* 4:1-7). The conclusion to the *Testament* implies that his hospitality was

¹¹⁹ The disciples are instructed to shake the dust off their feet as testimony against a town that does not welcome (δέχομαι) them (9:5; 10:10-11). The refusal of the Samaritans to welcome (δέχομαι) Jesus does not bode well for them given this context of judgment (9:53). One metaphor employed to describe a postmortem fate is being welcomed into people's homes (16:9). Specific attention is given to welcoming and providing for people who are socially-economically vulnerable or marginalized. Welcoming (δέχομαι) a child in Jesus' name is tantamount to welcoming (δέχομαι) him and the one who sent him (Luke 9:48). The reason provided is that "the least among all of you is the greatest" (9:48).

¹²⁰ Jesus suggests that one will be repaid regardless of whom one invites. Inviting friends, relatives or rich neighbors will result in being repaid by them (Luke 14:12). A similar point is later illustrated in the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man (16:25).

¹²¹ Seneca's instruction to Lucilius, to "reflect carefully beforehand with whom you are to eat and drink For a dinner of meats without the company of a friend is like the life of a lion or a wolf," reinforces the reciprocal principle underlying table fellowship and hospitality (*Ep.* 19.11).

¹²² His welcoming of the "cripples and helpless" is significant in light of the banquet instructions to invite such people (*T. Ab.* 1:2; Luke 14:12-14).

also the chief reason for the eternal life that Abraham experiences (*T. Ab.* 20:15).

Abraham's hospitality does result in being rich toward God.

5.2.5.6 Alms

The parable's immediate literary context indicates that Luke was aware of options for utilizing possessions that the rich man did not adopt. Chief among these is alms, the sharing of one's goods with the poor, and a third specific type of generosity. In Ben Sira, the giving of alms (ἐλεήμοσυνη) is repeatedly presented as an ideal use of possessions and a proper response to the poor.¹²³ In the literary context of the parable, this is also Luke's primary recommendation for how one is to use possessions in light of death's inevitability (12:33). One is first enjoined to sell one's possessions (πωλήσατε τὰ ὑπάρχοντα) and then to give alms (δότε ἐλεημοσύνην).¹²⁴ This proposal to sell one's goods and give alms has an important literary function in that it represents an antithetical alternative to the rich man's actions in the parable.¹²⁵ He collects, gathers, and saves instead of selling. Moreover, these acts are understood to be "for himself" and not for anyone else (12:21). He gives to no one else and he does not (apparently) plan on doing so.

Luke's awareness of alms as an ideal way of using possessions is evident elsewhere in Luke-Acts.¹²⁶ In the gospel, he only uses the technical term for alms twice

¹²³ Sir 3:14, 30; 7:10; 12:3; 16:14; 17:22, 29; 29:8, 12; 31:11; 25:2; 35:2; 40:17, 24.

¹²⁴ Leaving (ἀποτάσσομαι) all one's possessions becomes a requirement for anyone who wishes to become a disciple of Jesus (Luke 14:33).

¹²⁵ So Dupont, *Les béatitudes*, 3:183.

¹²⁶ See, e.g., Luke 11:41; Acts 9:36; 10:2, 4, 31; 24:17.

(ἐλεήμοσυνη) (11:41; 12:33),¹²⁷ and there are important links between these two instances. Jesus prescribes alms as the antidote to the greed (ἀρπαγή) and wickedness (πονηρία) of the Pharisees (Luke 11:41; cf. 11:39). This is a precedent for Luke's proposal of alms (12:33) as an alternative to greed (12:15). It also reflects a specific belief that one's greed can be overcome by the act of giving alms.

The recommendation regarding alms in 11:41 may also be intended as an antidote to the deadness of the Pharisees' lives, an accusation implicit in Jesus' description of them as unmarked graves (τὰ μνημεῖα τὰ ἄδηλα) (11:44).¹²⁸ In the statement that precedes the parable, Jesus notes that one's life (ζωή) does not consist in the abundance of one's possessions (ὑπαρχόντων) (12:15). Luke's use of ζωή and not βίος is significant here given that every use of ζωή in Luke's gospel is linked with the use of possessions (10:25; 12:15; 16:25; 18:18, 30).¹²⁹ In the parable of the Samaritan, for example, the abundance of (eternal) life is linked to giving one's possessions away to someone in need (10:25-37).

These connections between life and the use of possessions invite us to consider that the rich man in Luke's parable began to die long before the announcement of his

¹²⁷ The technical term for alms is also used to describe the consistent practice of characters in Acts such as Dorcas/Tabitha (Acts 9:36) and Cornelius (Acts 10:1-31). The use of the imperfect ἐποίει in 9:36 suggests that giving of alms was an ongoing practice of Dorcas. It is possible that the tunics and clothing that Dorcas made were given away in the form of alms (Acts 9:39).

¹²⁸ Their "unseen deadness" is evident in the fact that people walk over them without knowing it (Luke 11:44).

¹²⁹ The first occurrence of the term, in 10:25, highlights how hospitality and generosity are integral ingredients in loving neighbor, and therefore, in inheriting eternal life and living. Immediately preceding the parable of the Rich Fool, Jesus declares that one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions (12:15). In the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man, the latter is told by Abraham that he received his "good things" during his life and that Lazarus did not (16:25). Jesus' answer to the rich ruler's question of what must be done to inherit eternal life is that he must sell everything and give to the poor (18:18, 22). Those who have left homes or families for the kingdom of God will receive much more, both in this age and in "eternal life" (18:30). It is perhaps equally significant that none of the occurrences of the term in Acts are linked to the use of possessions (Acts 2:28; 3:15; 5:20; 8:33; 11:18; 13:46, 48; 17:25).

imminent biological death. God announces the end of his βίος (12:20) but there is a sense in which his ζωή had already begun to die. An unspoken implication of 12:15 is that the abundance of one's possessions might lead to a living death. This reading is compelling given the link between the rapacity of the Pharisees (11:41) and the description of them as “unmarked graves” (11:44). The man in the parable is depicted as less alive than his possessions, the latter of which engage in more activity than the former. Seneca writes frequently of the “living dead” and attributes such a premature death to luxury.¹³⁰ It is significant, moreover, that one is instructed to sell the very thing (ὑπάρχοντα) (12:15, 33) in which the abundance of life does not consist. Whereas the abundance of possessions does not lead to life (and can even contribute to a living death), the giving of alms functions as a potential vehicle of life.¹³¹

Selling one's possessions and giving alms is understood, moreover, as an act that has lasting consequences in the future. It does not only influence one's degree of life in the present. Selling goods and giving alms is likened to an “unfailing treasure” (θησαυρὸν ἀνέκλειπτον) in heaven, one which cannot be stolen or destroyed (12:33).¹³² This impregnable investment stands in sharp contrast to the ease with which the rich man was separated from his goods (12:20). The counter intuitive implication is that the selling and giving away of goods produces a lasting investment that will not be stolen or destroyed. A similar principle is articulated in Jesus' remark to the rich ruler, that selling

¹³⁰ *Ep.* 122.3, 4, 10; 82.3-4.

¹³¹ In Luke-Acts a causal relationship exists between giving alms and how one is treated by God. See esp. Acts 10:2, 4, 31; cf. 9:37-42.

¹³² Lucian also refers to riches that cannot be taken away, whether it be from a blackmailer, a mob, or a tyrant. Such riches are not found, however, in giving them to the poor, but rather in a self-reliance born from poverty (*Tim.* 36-37).

one's goods and distributing to the poor provides one with treasure in heaven (ἐξείς θησαυρὸν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς) (18:22).

Jesus reiterates that relinquishing control over one's possessions (by selling and giving them away) results in a secured investment. A similar point is made in the conclusion to the discourse on anxiety (12:33), where alms are offered as an alternative to the greed and anxiety of the man in the parable.¹³³ The rich man's endeavor to control his goods (by storing and saving them) is shown to be impotent in protecting his goods from life's vicissitudes. Moreover, Jesus' remark to the rich ruler intimates that the secure treasure in heaven is one's own (ἐξείς), implying that selling possessions and giving to the poor somehow secures one's own future with God. In this regard, Luke echoes Ben Sira's promise that storing up almsgiving in one's treasury will "rescue you from every disaster" (Sir 29:12).

Sapiential texts propose various uses of possessions in light of the uncontrollable facets of death. Luke participates in this conversation by recommending alms as a meaningful use of goods in light of death's inevitability and life's fragility. Alms, Luke suggests, is a vehicle of meaning and life, both for the giver and the recipient. This recommendation of alms is significant for with it Luke aligns himself with the favorable attitude toward alms in Ben Sira (and other Jewish works such as Tobit).¹³⁴

The proposal of alms as a meaningful use of possessions is a notable difference from Lucian or Seneca. Seneca does not enjoin this activity, and giving to the needy

¹³³ So Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1996), 124.

¹³⁴ Sir 3:14, 30; 7:10; 12:3; 16:14; 17:22, 29; 29:8, 12; 31:11; 25:2; 35:2; 40:17, 24; Tob 1:3, 16; 4:7-11, 16; 12:8-9; 14:2, 11.

appears only peripherally in Lucian.¹³⁵ The absence of alms in these two authors is indicative of the dearth of material on alms in Greco-Roman texts.¹³⁶ This difference in attention to alms reflects a broader and more fundamental divergence among texts whose focus is death and possessions. In contrast to Qoheleth, Ben Sira, *T. Ab.*, and Luke, neither Lucian nor Seneca display an avid interest in constructive uses of possessions. They focus instead on the inherent destructive potential of wealth and goods. This marks a key difference regarding how texts speak about and conceive possessions. Underlying this difference are two disparate premises regarding the nature of possessions. Whereas Lucian and Seneca highlight the dangers of wealth and possessions, Hellenistic Jewish texts speak of their beneficial possibilities.¹³⁷

Luke's parable and its immediate literary context situates itself within a contested conversation regarding the use of possessions given the inevitability of death. The rich man, however, enacts none of these specific suggestions. The closest he comes to doing so is to *plan* on enjoying his goods. When read in light of the broader sapiential conversation on death and possessions, the neglect to practice any of these recommendations constitutes an egregious fault. The rich man has failed to use his goods meaningfully given death's inevitability, uncertain timing, and potential imminence. For his failure to enact any of these sapiential recommendations regarding the use of possessions in light of his mortality, the rich man earns the epithet "fool." His folly, in

¹³⁵ Lucian twice refers to using goods in this way, although on neither occasion is it related to death. Thrasyclus suggests that Timon, if he is unwilling to throw his goods into the sea, distribute (διὰ δίδωμι) them "to all the needy (δέω)" (*Tim.* 57; cf. *Tim.* 8; *Vit. auc.* 9).

¹³⁶ So Harrington, *Ben Sira*, 33. Luke's focus on alms as an ideal use of possessions indicates the important influence of *Jewish* sapiential literature on his work.

¹³⁷ Statements about the dangers of goods are not absent in the latter texts, but they are not at the forefront. Among Jewish texts, *I Enoch* is a notable exception. It differs from Lucian and Seneca, however, for it views possessions, not as inherently dangerous, but as a sign of someone who is wicked.

light of these sapiential texts, consists in having a limited imagination. In light of the parable's immediate literary context, however, the man's folly only partially consists in failing to adopt these specific sapiential recommendations. We turn now to explore the reasons why Luke regards the man as a fool.

5.3 Reading the Parable in Its Immediate Literary Context (12:13-15, 21)

In light of sapiential texts, the man's folly consists partially in his failure, given death's uncertain timing and potential imminence, to enact any of the six sapiential recommendations for the use of possessions. There are, however, additional reasons for the man's folly, and some of these are highlighted in the parable's immediate literary context (12:13-15, 21). I turn therefore to assess the parable and the man's folly in light of the episode immediately preceding the parable (12:13-15), and the comment that concludes (and interprets) the parable (12:21).¹³⁸

Luke 12:21 functions literarily and theologically as a hermeneutical key for the interpretation of the parable: "So is the one who stores up for oneself and is not rich toward God (οὕτως ὁ θησαυρίζων ἑαυτῷ καὶ μὴ εἰς θεὸν πλουτῶν)."¹³⁹ This assessment of the rich man faults him on two related counts. He treasures up for himself (12:21a), and he is not rich toward God (12:21b). The parable's conclusion identifies these specific shortcomings as reasons for the man's folly. The charge of treasuring for oneself echoes the critique of avarice which prefaces the parable (12:15). In addition, the

¹³⁸ See below for my analysis of 12:22-34.

¹³⁹ Dupont, *Les béatitudes*, 3:115, considers 12:21 "Luke's personal point of view." This verse does not, of course, function as an interpretive key for those few Lukan manuscripts that lack 12:21 (Codex Bezae and three Old Latin mss [it^{a,b,d}]). The absence of Luke 12:21 in Thomas's parallel version of the parable is a striking difference with Luke, one that will be explored at the end of this chapter.

first half of 12:21 confirms what was presaged in 12:15, namely that the rich man's plans are to be primarily understood in terms of greed.

In what follows, I analyze the parable in light of these two issues raised in 12:13-15 and 12:21, namely the critique of greed, and the failure to be rich toward God. These two issues are related since Luke 12:21 theologically evaluates the rich man's plans by equating his "storing up for himself" as a failure to be rich towards God. In addition to showing how 12:13-15 and 12:21 interpret the parable, I will also explore how the parable reads and interprets these texts.¹⁴⁰

My analysis will also situate both of these issues (the critique of greed and being rich toward God) vis-à-vis the sapiential conversation regarding death and possessions. Luke 12:13-15 and 12:21 raise as many questions as they answer. Why is greed, for example, tantamount to folly? What is it about the man's greed that causes him to be evaluated as foolish? What does it mean, moreover, to be rich toward God? How precisely do the man's plans reflect a "poverty" towards God? The matrix of the sapiential conversation on death and possessions will prove to be a fruitful source of answers to these and other questions.

¹⁴⁰ See above (5.2.2) for the argument that the parable should be read in light of its literary context. The justification for doing so includes the lexical and thematic links between 12:13-15, 12:16-20, 12:21, and 12:22-34. *θησαυρίζων* occurs in 12:21, and both *θησαυρόν* (12:33) and *θησαυρός* (12:34) appear in the conclusion to the discourse (12:22-34). The man, although "rich" (*πλούσιος*) (12:16), is not rich towards God (*εἰς θεὸν πλουτῶν*). *ἑαυτῷ* is used in both 12:17 and 12:21 to highlight the man's solitary nature. Metzger, *Consumption and Wealth*, suggests that the comparative function of *παραβολή* would lead readers to see in 12:16 a "comparison between the man from the crowd and the rich man" in the parable.

5.3.1 “Storing up for Oneself”: The Critique and Analysis of Greed in 12:13-21

Luke’s critique of greed is explicit in the warning against avarice (πλεονεξία) that precedes the parable (12:15).¹⁴¹ The import of this admonition is indicated by the use, unattested elsewhere in Luke, of a double imperative: “Beware and guard yourselves” (ὀρᾶτε καὶ φυλάσσεσθε).¹⁴² The warning against avarice frames Luke 12:16-21, and functions literarily as an interpretive lens through which Luke understands the parable. In light of 12:13-15, the parable illustrates someone whose plans are characterized by greed.¹⁴³ Like the brother seeking his share of the inheritance, the rich man pursues a sapiential option regarding possessions that Luke deems meaningless and futile. Moreover, the rich man in the parable has an abundance of possessions (12:15) but his life (ζωή) does not consist in them. His goods do not enhance or contribute to the flourishing of his ζωή.

The conclusion of the parable (12:21) evaluates the man’s plans in a similar manner by interpreting them as a selfish treasuring up of goods. Like the comment immediately preceding the parable (12:15), 12:21 understands the man’s plans as a greedy endeavor. But Luke contributes two insights in 12:21 that are not made explicit in

¹⁴¹ Although this is the sole occurrence of πλεονεξία in Luke-Acts, Luke’s concern for greed is by no means limited to this episode. Judas (Luke 22:2-6; Acts 1:16-20), Ananias, and Saphira (Acts 5:1-11) illustrate the deadly consequences of greed.

¹⁴² So Metzger, *Consumption and Wealth*, 67; Seccombe, *Possessions*, 139; Hendrickx, *The Parables*, 98-99. This use of φυλάσσω is ironic given its association with protecting, guarding, or hoarding possessions (Qoh 5:12; Lucian, *Dial. mort.* 1.3; *Tim.* 13-14; *Men.* 2; Plutarch, *Cupid. divit.* 7). Luke is aware of this association, and also uses φυλάσσω in a similar manner (11:21). In 12:15, Luke plays on this typical usage by applying the verb to *avarice*. Rather than guarding wealth, one is to guard against every form of seeking and accumulating a superfluous share of it.

¹⁴³ Many understand the parable as an illustration of the principle in 12:15. See, e.g., Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 447.

12:13-15.¹⁴⁴ First, in light of the man's imminent death, his plans are found to be inadequate because they evince no awareness of anyone else. His treasure is stored up *for himself* (ἐαυτῶ) and himself alone (12:21a). Second, the man's plans, although ostensibly concerned with the use of possessions, are interpreted in 12:21b as a *theological* act.

The parable corroborates the interpretation in 12:21a regarding the selfish nature of the envisioned storage of goods. The life of the man in the parable is completely solitary, and it bears some resemblance to the pervasive focus in Qoheleth on life as a solitary endeavor, one almost entirely void of community and relationships.¹⁴⁵ Seven of the eleven verbs in his monologue are in the first person singular (ποιήσω, συνάξω, ποιήσω, καθελῶ, οἰκοδομήσω, συνάξω, ἔρω).¹⁴⁶ This use of the first person also bears resemblance to Qoheleth.¹⁴⁷ When the man does reason or speak he converses not with others but only himself, establishing himself as his sole interlocutor. His first act is “reasoning to himself” (διαλογίζετο ἐν ἑαυτῶ) (12:17), and he later envisions speaking to his self (ψυχῆ) (12:19). One of the important narrative functions of the divine announcement (12:20) is the provision of a perspective distinct from that of the rich man.

¹⁴⁴ *Contra* Snodgrass, *Stories*, 716, ft. 32, who sees no difference between 12:15 and 12:21. The second insight has to do with the reference to “not being rich toward God” (12:21b), and is treated below.

¹⁴⁵ Fox, *A Time to Tear Down*, 343, sees in Qoheleth “no awareness of himself as part of a nation or a community. His values are solitary, all his judgments gauged by benefit or harm to the individual.” See also Burkes, *God, Self, and Death*, 80, 84; James G. Williams, “What Does It Profit a Man?: The Wisdom of Koheleth,” in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom* (ed. James L. Crenshaw; New York: Ktav, 1976), 376.

¹⁴⁶ On the use of the monologue in Luke, see Philip Sellew, “Interior Monologue as a Narrative Device in the Parables of Luke,” *CBQ* 54/3 (1992): 239-53.

¹⁴⁷ Burkes, *God, Self, Death*, 71, notes that in Qoheleth the “use of the first person pronoun is unusually frequent in comparison to other biblical books.” See also R. N. Whybray, *Ecclesiastes* (NCBC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 6; Eric S. Christianson, *A Time to Tell* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 41.

The man's solitary nature is noteworthy given the causal relationship Lucian envisions between wealth and a solitary lifestyle.¹⁴⁸ The role of death in the following dialogue makes it especially pertinent. After choosing once again to be rich, the character Timon declares:

For myself, I purpose now to buy the whole farm, build a tower over the treasure just large enough for me to live in, and have it for my tomb when I am dead (*Tim.* 42).

Timon's solitary existence, implied here, becomes explicit in his continuing description. Relevant for Luke's parable and the subsequent proposal of alms, is the effect of wealth upon Timon's attitude and (lack of) actions towards others:

Be it resolved and enacted into law, to be binding for the rest of my life, that I shall *associate with no one, recognize no one and scorn everyone*. Friends, guests, comrades and Altars of Mercy shall be matter for boundless mockery. To pity one who weeps, to help one who is in need shall be a misdemeanor and an infringement of the constitution. *My life shall be solitary*, like that of wolves; Timon shall be my only friend . . . *Timon shall keep his wealth to himself, scorn everyone and live in luxury all by himself*, remote from flattery and tiresome praise. He shall sacrifice to the gods and celebrate his feast-days *by himself, his own sole neighbor and crony, shaking free of all others*. Be it once for all resolved that *he shall give himself the farewell handclasp when he comes to die, and shall set the funeral wreath upon his own brow* (*Tim.* 42-43).

Timon's lack of compassion for others is plain in the new, favorite name he chooses for himself, "the Misanthrope." He will not help people, he declares, whether someone is perishing in a fire or drowning (*Tim.* 44).

Lucian's depiction of Timon underscores the social consequences of greed. Avarice is a vice whose tentacles not only ensnare its primary victim, but also isolate her socially. Such is the fate of the rich man in the parable. He envisions himself as the sole

¹⁴⁸ Lucian contends that a rich man (πλούσιος ἄνθρωπος) is actually poor (πέννης) if he eats alone (*Par.* 58).

recipient and beneficiary of his “many goods things” (12:19a).¹⁴⁹ This social dimension of greed is evident in the term πλεονεξία, one denotation of which is “one’s own advantage” over others.¹⁵⁰ Luke is eager to immunize his implied audience against these social dangers of greed. His proposal of alms envisions an alternative relational structure, integral to which is the strengthening of social bonds.

The rich man’s attitude toward his possessions further buttresses the interpretation in 12:21 that the man’s plans exclude consideration of others. For the man consistently employs the possessive pronoun “my” (μου) to refer to possessions. The crops (καρπούς) (12:17), the barns (12:18),¹⁵¹ the goods (ἀγαθά) (12:18), and the self (ψυχῆ)¹⁵² (12:19) are all considered “mine” (μου). This view is in stark contrast to Qoheleth’s insistence on the nature of goods as divine gifts.¹⁵³ The irony regarding the man’s perception as an owner of these four things is revealed most clearly when each one of them is removed by the parable’s end. An unspecified “they” are demanding (ἀπαίτουσιν) his life (ψυχῆ) (12:20a). God’s concluding question reminds the man that his “ownership” of his goods has come to an abrupt end (12:20b). This announcement of his imminent death reveals that he is no longer (and perhaps never was) possessor and controller of these items. He is rather subject to the control of another (or others).

¹⁴⁹ Metzger, *Consumption and Wealth*, 75, sees in 12:19 evidence for the completely selfish orientation of the man.

¹⁵⁰ Liddell-Scott, 1416. A πλεονέκτης is one who “has or claims more than one’s due” (Liddell-Scott, 1416), implying (in a limited goods economy) that others suffer as a result of such greed. Metzger, *Consumption and Wealth*, 68, notes: “πλεονεξία was also associated with an aggressive, ruthless and sometimes violent grasping for power or honor *at the expense of others*.” Emphasis his. Dupont, *Les béatitudes*, 184, similarly understands πλεονεξία as “*d’avoir avantage*.” Eichholz, “Vom reichen Kornbauern,” 180, defines the term as “*Mehr-haben-wollen (als man hat)*.” Cf. Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 447-48. For a list of sources which attest this social aspect of πλεονεξία, see Metzger, *Consumption and Wealth*, 68; Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 448.

¹⁵¹ Uncial W lacks the word μου before ἀποθήκας (12:18).

¹⁵² Uncial F lacks τῆ ψυχῆ μου.

¹⁵³ Qoh 2:24-26; 3:13; 5:17-6:2; cf. 8:15.

Tacit in this divine announcement are two realities, both of which Qoheleth also discovers: that any attempt to control possessions so as to obtain a specific manageable outcome is futile and doomed to fail (Qoheleth 2), and that the status of goods as divine gifts precludes the possibility of human ownership. For Qoheleth, this failure meant, on the one hand, an inability to secure meaning in his quest to seize and possess wisdom, wealth, and pleasure. On the other hand, it led him to abandon his quest to control possessions with a predetermined outcome, and to enjoy them instead. The rich man is not given any second chances since his imminent death is a part of God’s announcement. The man’s failure and folly thus serve as a potential instructive lesson to the hearers of the parable and the readers/hearers of Luke.

The rich man’s assumption regarding the control he wields over his goods is ironic given the parable’s description of the man and his goods. The parable only describes the man in terms of his relationship to his possessions.¹⁵⁴ Apart from ἄφρων,¹⁵⁵ the parable uses only one word to describe the man: “rich” (πλούσιος) (12:16).¹⁵⁶ By producing abundantly, the land accomplishes more than the man whose agency is restricted throughout the parable to speaking (or thinking) his intentions. Apart from planning, the man does not act or do anything in the parable. This failure to act is significant given Luke’s emphasis in other parables on the importance of action.¹⁵⁷ To

¹⁵⁴ Metzger, *Consumption and Wealth*, 70, notes that the man is “indeed *defined* exclusively by his wealth.” Emphasis his.

¹⁵⁵ And τινός (12:16).

¹⁵⁶ This is the first of three ἄνθρωπος τις πλούσιος parables (16:1-8; 16:19-31) and the second of seven or eight ἄνθρωπος τις parables in Luke (10:30-36; 14:16-24; 15:11-32; 16:1-8; 16:19-31; 19:12-27; 20:9-15 [many MSS. omit τις in 20:9]). κριτής τις is the subject of one parable (18:2). Luke 14:2 is the only occurrence of ἄνθρωπος τις outside of a parable. The phrase ἄνθρωπος τις does not occur in Acts.

¹⁵⁷ In the parable of the Samaritan (10:30-36), action is the only thing that distinguishes the latter character from the priest and the Levite. The four-fold repetition of the verb “to do” (ποιέω) in the

fail to act is for Luke an act of failure. Because each of the rich man's plans is a response to his goods, there is, moreover, a sense in which the man is owned by what he owns. He is possessed by his possessions. The ownership exerted by the possessions over the man is illustrated most graphically, if one understands the man's goods as the referent of ἀπαρτοῦσιν,¹⁵⁸ in their taking away of the man's ψυχῆ (12:20). The man exemplifies Seneca's description of the "owners of great estates: they are only accessories and incidentals to their possessions" (*Ep.* 82.18).

The instruction to give alms (12:33) serves an important function for it is an explicit alternative and corrective to the avarice of 12:15 and the "treasuring up for oneself" in 12:21.¹⁵⁹ Luke presents a constructive option as a counter to the rich man's greed. Problematic for the man's plans is Jesus' declaration, immediately preceding the parable, that one's life (ζωή) does not consist in the abundance of one's possessions (12:15). This remark frames the parable by raising an expectation that the parable will address this claim. The parable accomplishes this by illustrating that the man's plans fail to engender life (ζωή), either for him or for others.

The parable's conclusion, that the man is storing "for himself" (12:21a), further suggests that relationality might be one aspect of the "life" mentioned in 12:15. The description of the rich man's plans certainly illustrates this claim. He lives alone, dreams

dialogue between Jesus and the lawyer (10:25-37) also underscores the importance of action. The conclusions to both mini-dialogues between Jesus and the lawyer include commands that the lawyer "do" something, in the first instance to love God and neighbor (τοῦτο ποίει, 10:28), and in the second to do mercy like the Samaritan (ποίη ὁμοίως, 10:37). Jesus' first answer to the lawyer (10:28) provides an important caveat to the lawyer's answer (10:27) by emphasizing the insufficiency of cognitive knowledge. *Doing* the commandments, not merely knowing them, leads to inheriting eternal life and living (10:28). Similarly, *doing* mercy, like the Samaritan, leads to eternal life. The lawyer is exhorted to imitate this *doing* of mercy (10:37b).

¹⁵⁸ So Stagg, *Studies in Luke's Gospel*, 90-91; Stacy, "Luke 12:13-21," 288.

¹⁵⁹ Dupont, *Les béatitudes*, 3:117, reads 12:21 as an anticipation (albeit an abridged form), of 12:33 and the recommendation in Matt 6:19-20.

alone, and will (apparently) die alone. Life (ζωή) does not consist in the abundance of possessions since the pursuit and protection of goods involves insularity from others. One's life consists rather in the selling and giving of one's goods (12:33) since this act requires a level of relational interaction, central to which is the extension of life to another.

The critique of greed, a central component of the way in which Luke interprets the parable (12:13-15, 21), is a leitmotif in many sapiential discussions of death and possessions.¹⁶⁰ Plutarch's *De Cupiditate*, although not giving extensive attention to the motif of death, exemplifies the rejection by Greco-Roman moralists of greed as a meaningful enterprise. Several of the texts explored in the previous three chapters situate a critique of greed within a discussion about death.¹⁶¹ Proverbs, for instance, warns that death is the ultimate consequence for those who are "greedy for gain" (Prov 1:19a), and that greed for gain "takes away the life of its possessors" (τὴν ἑαυτῶν ψυχὴν ἀφαιροῦνται) (1:19b). Egyptian texts also critique greed in broader discussions of death.¹⁶² Relevant to Luke 12 is Lucian's description of a person who refused to leave property to heirs because of his greed (*Dial. mort.* 22.7).¹⁶³

5.3.2 "Not Rich toward God": 12:20, 21b, 22-34

Another important way in which 12:21 interprets the parable is by evaluating the man's plans in theological terms. Luke equates storing up for oneself with "not being rich toward God (μὴ εἶς θεὸν πλουτῶν)" (12:21b). This interpretation is significant since the

¹⁶⁰ For Seneca's critiques of greed, see *Ep.* 94.43; 119.6, 8; 110.9; 119.9; cf. 16.8.

¹⁶¹ Sir 11:23-26; 14:9a; *I En.* 94:6-7; 97.8a-10;

¹⁶² Instruction of Ptahhotep (11, 14, 19-22) (*AEL* I:66-67).

¹⁶³ For other critiques of greed, see *Dial. mort.* 1.3; 14.2.

man's plans (12:17-19) exhibit no explicit reference to God. But despite this (or because of it?), his plans are deemed to reflect and constitute a poverty vis-à-vis God. This theological poverty is an overt contrast to his previously described economic wealth (πλουσίος) (12:16). The man, although rich, is poor in relation to God. By theologically construing plans that are ostensibly concerned with the use of goods, Luke reconfigures an existential aspect of the sapiential conversation for his own theological purposes. Yet Luke 12:21 does not explicitly clarify what it means to be rich toward God. Such elucidation is provided in the subsequent discourse (12:22-34).

Luke's theological reading of the interplay of death and possessions is evident in three ways: God's appearance in the parable (12:20), the comment regarding the man's failure to be rich toward God (12:21), and the important function of God in the subsequent discourse (12:22-34). The parable of the "Rich Fool" is unique in being the only canonical parable in which God appears as a character in the narrative. Although God's time on stage is relatively brief, God's announcement in 12:20 is a crucial element in the plot, providing both the anagnorisis and peripeteia.¹⁶⁴ God evaluates the man as a fool, informs him of his imminent demise, and questions him regarding the future ownership of his goods. The importance of God's appearance in the parable is underscored by the subsequent references to God in 12:21 and the subsequent discourse (12:22-34) in which characterizations of God figure prominently in the discourse's rhetoric.

¹⁶⁴ The peripeteia refers to a moment of reversal, and the anagnorisis is a moment of recognition or discovery. In Greek tragedy, the former usually preceded the latter. The first half of God's announcement regarding the man's death (12:20a) functions as a peripeteia, and the question concerning the future status of the possessions (12:20b) functions as the anagnorisis.

Luke 12:22-34 constitutes an argument that God's character has implications for the meaningful use of possessions. The character of God functions in Luke's argument (12:22-34) as a warrant both for admonitions not to worry (12:22, 25, 26, 29), and for the instruction regarding giving alms (12:33). In this extended argument, God is primarily depicted as a father (πατήρ) (12:30, 32) who cares for animals and the grass (12:24, 28), and (even more so) for people (12:24, 28, 31-32).¹⁶⁵ His care for the former is evident by observing nature, and is adduced as evidence for his care for the latter. God's fatherhood is manifest in knowing (οἶδα) that people need (χρηρίζω) food and drink (12:30). An implication of such knowledge is that one need not pursue food and drink as the "nations of the world" do (12:30a). Not seeking after food and drink can free people to seek instead the father's βασιλεία, which the father is pleased to give them (12:31a, 32). Their freedom to seek this kingdom is predicated upon trusting that their father will give them food and drink (12:31b).

The exhortation to seek the kingdom and give alms is thus rooted in a specific understanding of God as one who cares for people and provides their basic necessities. Luke has previously established that God's character as a caring father has implications for how one uses possessions. In light of the fact that God is a merciful father, for instance, one is to lend "expecting nothing in return" (Luke 6:35-36).

This Lukan depiction of God is both consonant with and divergent from portrayals of the deity in sapiential texts. With Qoheleth¹⁶⁶ and other wisdom texts,¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Diane G. Chen, *God as Father in Luke-Acts* (SBL 92; New York: Peter Lang, 2006), argues that the depiction of "God as Father" is central to Luke's theology.

¹⁶⁶ In Qoheleth, fear characterizes the primary way in which one relates to God (Qoh 3:14; 5:7; 7:18).

Luke emphasizes the need to fear God (Luke 12:4-5). Luke also shares with Qoheleth a perception of God as one whose primary activity consists of giving. In Qoheleth, giving is the primary way in which God relates to people,¹⁶⁸ and Luke emphasizes God's nature as a giver in the discourse following the parable (12:24, 28, 31-32). Yet whereas the gifted nature of possessions leads Qoheleth to recommend enjoyment,¹⁶⁹ God's status as a giver in Luke is cited as a warrant to relinquish one's goods in the form of alms (12:33).¹⁷⁰ For Luke, God's propensity to give is grounds for an *imitatio Dei* in which people become givers themselves.¹⁷¹

Luke's depiction of God as a caring father comports with some sapiential texts, and diverges from others. On the one hand, this portrayal echoes Ben Sira's portrayal of God as a merciful, compassionate father.¹⁷² It is noteworthy that both Ben Sira and Luke employ the familial term "father" (πατήρ) to refer to God (Sir 23:1, 4; cf. Sir 51:10; Luke 12:30, 32).¹⁷³ Nor is this notion unique to Jewish texts. Seneca also speaks of God as a father "of us all," and links the notion of God's fatherhood to his giving nature (*Ep.*

¹⁶⁷ On the fear of God in other texts, see Prov 1:7, 29; 2:5; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 14:26, 27; 15:16, 33; 16:16; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17) and Sir 2:1-18.

¹⁶⁸ Qoh 2:24-26; 3:13; 5:17-18; 6:2; 8:15.

¹⁶⁹ Qoh 2:24a; 3:12; 5:17; 8:15.

¹⁷⁰ As noted above, Luke's emphasis on alms comports with Ben Sira's view of this as an ideal use of possessions.

¹⁷¹ Similarly, loving one's enemies and doing good to them results in becoming "children of the Most High," precisely because these actions embody God's treatment of people (6:35).

¹⁷² Cf. James L. Crenshaw, "The Concept of God in Old Testament Wisdom," in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie* (ed. Leo G. Perdue, Bernard Brandon Scott, et al; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 4-5, 8-9; Jeremy Corley, "God as Merciful Father in Ben Sira and the New Testament," in Renate Egger-Wenzel, ed., *Ben Sira's God: Proceedings of the International Ben Sira Conference Durham – Ushaw College 2001* (BZAW 321; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 33-38; Pancratius C. Beentjes, "God's Mercy: 'Racham'(pi.), 'Rachum', and 'Rachamim' in the Book of Ben Sira," in idem, *"Happy the One who Meditates on Wisdom" (Sir 14.20): Collected Essays on the Book of Ben Sira* (Biblical Exegesis and Theology 43; Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 231-48; cf. Harrington, *Ben Sira*, 32-33.

¹⁷³ Luke refers to God as "father" elsewhere (Luke 6:36; 10:21-22; 11:13; 22:29; Acts 1:7). In each of these cases it is Jesus who uses the term πατήρ. Peter also refers to God as "father" (Acts 2:33).

110.10). On the other hand, Luke's paternal term for God is a sharp departure from Qoheleth who not only does not use the term "father," but also refrains from using the divine personal name.¹⁷⁴

In light of 12:22-34, the man in the parable is not rich toward God because his plans represent a failure to trust in the character of the God depicted in this discourse. Saving for the future is inappropriate (and foolish) given the characterization of God as one who cares for birds and grass, and who values people more than these (12:24, 27-28, 30b, 31b-32). The man's monologue effectively violates the prohibition in the discourse against seeking what one might eat or drink (12:29). His plan to store his surplus of goods for future use indicates that he views himself, and not God, as the provider of his goods. An unspoken premise of the man's plans is that if he does not take care for himself by treasuring his goods for future use, then no one else will.

The invitation to give alms (12:33) is, by contrast, predicated on an understanding of God as a beneficent being. One can give alms if one trusts in the accuracy of Luke's rendering of God as a magnanimous giver. The giving of alms is an act that demonstrates trust in the kind of God Luke describes in 12:22-34. The man in the parable demonstrates no such trust, marking him as one who has "little faith" (ὀλιγόπιστος) (12:28).

The man's poverty towards God is indicated, secondly, in his neglect to use goods in the manner that God uses them, namely as gifts to others. Jesus' instruction to give alms is presented as a consequence of his understanding of God as a giver. One imitates

¹⁷⁴ Qoheleth never uses YHWH. He either uses אלהים (Qoh 1:13; 3:10, 13; 5:18; 7:18; 8:2, 13) or, far more frequently, האלהים (Qoh 2:24, 26; 3:11, 14, 17-18; 4:17; 5:1-2, 5-6, 17-19; 6:2; 7:13-14, 26, 29; 8:12, 15, 17; 9:1, 7; 11:5, 9; 12:7, 13, 14). The characterization of God in Qoheleth is complex and the portrayal of God as a giver is only one aspect of a more rounded treatment. God has been understood to be depicted in Qoheleth, for example, as a despot "whose decrees cannot be altered by human response" (Purdue, "Cosmology," 471-72).

God by giving alms. The rich man's plan to use his goods for his own benefit (and not for anyone else) represents the antithesis of alms, the preferred use of goods. This sharp contrast explains Luke's equation between the man's storage of goods for himself and his failure to be rich toward God (12:21). The man's failure to be rich toward God refers not to literal gifts of tithes or sacrifices but rather to the man's storage of a surplus of goods for his own (ἐαυτῶ) personal benefit.¹⁷⁵

A third aspect of the man's failure to be rich toward God consists in his failure to display any recognition that his goods are divine gifts. This failure is especially pronounced given the focus of goods as divine gifts in sapiential texts. Nor is it a coincidence that Luke 12:22-34 underscores God's nature as one who gives (12:24, 28, 31-32). A corollary of this depiction of God as a giver is a perception that one's own goods are indeed gifts from God. This is Qoheleth's perception, and it frequently informs his frequent recommendations to enjoy goods.¹⁷⁶ Ben Sira 11:14, a sapiential intertext for Luke's parable, identifies good things (ἀγαθά) and wealth (πλοῦτος) as two of many things that are "from the Lord." Yet the rich man consistently views his ἀγαθά (12:18, 19) as his own, evidenced by his fourfold repetition of μου (12:17-19). Luke 12:22-34 contrasts the rich man's perspective as owner of his goods with a reminder that they are given by God. In light of this contrast, God's statement (ἡτοίμασας) may indeed be ironic (12:20a).¹⁷⁷

The man's plan to store goods for his own benefit is a failure to be rich toward God because it demonstrates a lack of trust in God's care, and is the antithesis of giving

¹⁷⁵ Luke periodically critiques the giving of sacrifices or tithes (cf. Luke 11:42; 18:12; 20:47; 21:1-6).

¹⁷⁶ Qoh 3:12-13; 5:17-18; 6:2; 8:15.

¹⁷⁷ So Bovon, *Saint Luc*, 256.

away one's goods in the form of alms, an act replicating God's pattern of giving to people. Furthermore, as argued above (5.2.5.6), being rich toward God entails giving alms since it is this act that provides one with treasure with God (12:33-34; cf. 18:22).¹⁷⁸ Luke's discourse (12:22-34) characterizes God in specific terms in order to counter a destructive mindset (anxiety), and engender a specific use of goods (alms). The admonition to give alms concludes the broader sapiential discourse in 12:13-34, providing a counterbalance to attempts to secure meaning through pursuit of an inheritance (12:13-14) and solitary enjoyment (12:16-21).

It is not surprising that the God Luke depicts would not only have a vested interest in the man's use of his goods, but would also evaluate the man's plans as foolish. God's announcement invites the hearers of the parable and readers/hearers of Luke to evaluate the use of one's possessions in light of one's inevitable death and the potential imminence of one's demise. This rhetorical strategy is employed by Ben Sira and Lucian, both of whom use the inevitability and uncertain timing of death as an opportunity to assess one's use of possessions. God's question ("And the things you prepared – whose will they be?") reveals an interest not only with the end of the man's life but also with the life of the man's possessions after his death. Unlike *1 Enoch*, the possessions in this story have a life of their own, one whose end does not coincide with the death of the rich man.¹⁷⁹ God's question invites reflection upon the ongoing life of the rich man's possessions. What kind of life will the rich man's possessions have after he dies? More to the point: whose life will the rich man's possessions influence once he dies?

¹⁷⁸ For Dupont, *Les béatitudes*, 3:114, the man's folly, when viewed in light of Luke's redaction, consists in the failure to consider the "immediate advantages" of his riches, and their ability to provide happiness for him in "another life."

¹⁷⁹ See *1 Enoch* 98:3b.

The man's strategy is foolish since its realized outcome depends upon two unreliable factors, the fragility of goods and precariousness of plans for the future. One becomes rich toward God by giving alms since this act of love becomes an unfailing treasure in heaven. In contrast to the ephemerality and unreliability of goods and plans for the future, giving alms is an act of love that can never be destroyed. Luke assumes that all else can be taken away from someone, whether it be possessions or, in the extreme case, one's life. This everlasting nature of the act of love underscores all the more the meaninglessness of a solitary lifestyle. The life lived alone is guaranteed not to produce lasting significance or meaning since such lasting meaning requires some element of relationality.

Luke interprets the man's plans theologically (12:21) because God's character has implications for the use of possessions (12:22-34). God calls the man a fool for similar reasons. Luke's reading of the parable (12:21) reveals his interest in utilizing sapiential motifs for theological ends. He insists that one's use of goods is a direct reflection of whether one trusts in a specific portrayal of God as one who gives and cares for people. One's use of goods, maintains Luke, also bears directly on one's future relationship with God (12:33; cf. 18:22).

At the same time, Luke employs theological motifs (e.g., the character of God) in order to further his existential purposes. By characterizing the man's plans as a failure to be rich toward God, Luke redefines a theological world of which wisdom is a part. He appropriates sapiential motifs because they serve his interest in meaningful living. In

Luke's "theological wisdom,"¹⁸⁰ the use of possessions is an integral aspect and central ingredient to living meaningfully. Furthermore, meaningful living and a meaningful use of possessions is made more likely when one considers and contemplates the various facets of death (its inevitability, uncertain timing, and potential imminence). These uncontrollable facets of death and the uncertain vicissitudes of life provide a lens through which one can more easily discern if one's use of goods is meaningful.

We have determined that the parable's immediate literary context interprets the parable in three significant ways. Both Luke 12:15 and 21 highlight the man's greed as a reason for his folly. Luke 12:21 understands the man's plans as completely selfish, and interpret these plans theologically. We have also seen that that the parable simultaneously interprets its immediate literary context. It does so by illustrating the socially isolating nature of greed, thereby demonstrating one reason for its folly. We turn now to explore two specific ways in which sapiential texts help explain why the man is labeled a fool.

5.4 The Man's Folly in Light of Sapiential Texts

Sapiential texts prove helpful in illuminating additional reasons why Luke considers the man's actions to be foolish. Below I explore two such reasons, the man's plans to store up his goods for future use, and his neglect of his own mortality. The first of these is directly related to the man's greed, further buttressing the importance of reading the parable in light of 12:15 and 12:21. Similarly, the man's neglect of his mortality is both a sapiential motif and a concern of the parable's broader literary context.

¹⁸⁰ On this term, see Gammie, "From Prudentialism to Apocalypticism," 482.

5.4.1 “Storing Up for Oneself”: The Folly of Saving for the Future

In addition to his plans for enjoyment, the rich man’s primary (intended) use of his possessions consists of storing them up for the future. The small size of his barns, relative to the land’s abundant yield (12:16), leads to his decision to tear them down and build larger ones. His limited imagination is revealed in not even considering sharing his goods with others as a valid option. The purpose, at any rate, in building larger barns is so that he can store his goods for future use (12:18). He envisions his enjoyment as a *consequence* of this storage, but this enjoyment is not stated as the *reason* for storing his goods (12:18-19). His plans to store the land’s yield can be read as an attempt to abide by sapiential instructions that extol the virtues of saving one’s goods for the future.¹⁸¹ In light of such sapiential advice, the man’s plans are indeed a prudent effort to prepare for the future.

This decision to store his goods for future use is, however, deficient in light of sapiential texts that discuss death and possessions. Such texts do not propose saving for the future as a legitimate use of possessions. Saving one’s goods for future use does not even appear as a possibility in the sapiential texts we surveyed. Some of these texts explicitly criticize saving goods for the future. Lucian disparages those who “guard” (φυλάσσω) their gold since money is not needed in the afterlife (*Dial. mort.* 1.3). He also finds fault with those who guard (φυλάσσω) their wealth instead of enjoying (ἀπολαύω) it (*Tim.* 13-14). He tells of a resolution passed in Hades against the rich who guard (φυλάσσω) their fortunes, and keep them locked up (κατάκλειστος) (*Men.* 2). Papyrus Insinger favors enjoying goods over saving them, noting: “The life of one who

¹⁸¹ Syriac Menander 380-81; *Pap. In.* 5.15; 6.23-24; 7.1-6.

saves is one that passes without its having been known” (17.20). Not being known recalls the emphasis, both in sapiential texts and Luke 12:16-21, on the social isolation of those who are greedy. In sum, recommendations to save one’s goods appear in sapiential texts but not as proposals in response to the uncontrollable nature of death and life’s vicissitudes.

Most wisdom literature does not advocate saving as a meaningful counterbalance to death. Even texts with antithetical views of death and its aftermath agree in not proposing the saving of goods as a meaningful option. Qoheleth recommends enjoyment because death irreversibly ends this possibility.¹⁸² This same reason leads Ben Sira to recommend enjoyment and generosity.¹⁸³ *Testament of Abraham* recommends hospitality as a means of securing divine favor after death (*T. Ab.* 20:15). Producing a testament is also meaningful in that it provides one with the (potential) confidence of knowing who will receive one’s goods. Each of these options for utilizing possessions has the potential to provide meaning (even in light of death) because of the *gift* that is given to oneself, God, or another. Goods that are saved are not gifts. They are *potential* gifts, but as long as they remain in storage, this potential remains unrealized. In contrast, Luke repeatedly illustrates the actualization of wealth’s potential in the concrete act of giving or sharing it with others.¹⁸⁴

As noted previously, Luke provides a negative assessment of the man’s storage of goods in 12:21. It is possible, on the one hand, to read 12:21 as a critique of the selfish nature of the man’s storage of goods, and not necessarily as a denunciation of the act of

¹⁸² Qoh 3:19-22a; 5:14-17.

¹⁸³ Sir 11:19c-21; 14:11a-16.

¹⁸⁴ See, e.g., Luke 8:1-3; 10:25-37; 14:12-14; 15:20-32; 18:22; 19:1-10.

saving or storage. The instruction to give alms does, however, offer an explicit contrast to the act of saving up for the future. The parable illustrates that the storage of goods is a meaningless enterprise by framing such activity within the announcement of the man's imminent death. It is in light of death's inevitability, uncertain timing, and potential imminence that the storage of goods is shown to be a worthless enterprise. Such is one of the tacit lessons of God's question to the rich man (12:20b). Death reveals the man's relationship with his possessions to be inadequate, futile, and, therefore, meaningless. The parable and its conclusion suggest that death's inevitability and potential imminence make adages extolling the virtue of saving to be futile.

In sapiential texts, saving is an inadequate use of goods in light of death because one cannot be certain of what the future holds.¹⁸⁵ The uncertain nature of the future influences Qoheleth's admonition to enjoy goods (Qoh 3:22). Papyrus Insinger recommends enjoyment in the present moment since one does not know what tomorrow holds:

“Death and the life of tomorrow, we do not know their <nature>” (17.6).
“Today with its livelihood is what the wise man asks for” (17.7).
“He who loves to hoard wealth will die robbed of it” (17.8).¹⁸⁶

This last line (*P. Ins.* 17.8) is illustrated in Luke's parable and God's question to the man about the future status of his goods (12:20b). The man's plans of course exhibit no awareness of this inability to know what the future holds.

Sapiential texts emphasize in particular that one cannot predict the timing of one's death.¹⁸⁷ One should accordingly be prepared for death, since one cannot know its precise

¹⁸⁵ The Eloquent Peasant (*AEL* I:177).

¹⁸⁶ Lichtheim, 215, n. 53: “This sentence provides the best proof that *t3 wr.t* means ‘wealth, riches.’”

time of arrival.¹⁸⁸ In Egyptian texts, the uncertain timing of death is a warrant for enjoyment¹⁸⁹ and generosity,¹⁹⁰ but never for saving goods for the future. For Seneca, the brevity and fragility of life underscore death's potential imminence. Life is brief and passes quickly.¹⁹¹ Opportunities to die unexpectedly are many (*Ep.* 4.8). The Epistle of James, an early Jewish-Christian text imbued with sapiential features,¹⁹² chastises people whose plans for the future include doing business and making money (Jas 4:13). James calls such boasting evil, and he critiques their plans since the future is uncertain (Jas 4:14a), and one does not know if death is imminent (Jas 4:14b). The proper perspective is to recognize and affirm that one only lives and enacts plans if the Lord wills it (Jas 4:15).

In light of such texts, the man's plans, both to store his goods and later enjoy them, are foolish because they reflect an assumption that the future will unfold according to his plans. The man's level of certainty is reflected in the declarative statements he makes about the future (12:18-19). He does not express desires but assumes that the future will unfold precisely as he imagines. He evinces no awareness of a possibility that the future might have different plans than he does. The man's plans suggest, on the contrary, that he envisions his future as a manageable vessel, with himself captaining the

¹⁸⁷ Seneca, *Ep.* 4.7-8.

¹⁸⁸ Instruction of Any (*AEL* II:138).

¹⁸⁹ Admonitions of Ipuwer (*AEL* I:157, 160).

¹⁹⁰ Instruction of Ankhsheshonq (12.5, 17-18; *AEL* III:168-69).

¹⁹¹ *Ep.* 48.12; 49.4; 58.23.

¹⁹² Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Letter of James: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 37A; New York: Doubleday, 1995), 164: "James mediates to the Christian community the wisdom traditions both of the Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures." On the sapiential character of James, see Johnson, *James*, 33-34; L. Simon, *Une Ethique de la Sagesse: Commentaire de l'epître de Jacques* (Geneve: Editions Labor et Fides, 1961; R. Hoppe, *Der theologische Hintergrund des Jakobusbriefes* (FzB 28; Würzburg: Echter-Verlag, 1977; H. Frankemölle, "Zum Thema des Jakobusbriefes im Kontext der Rezeption von Sir 2, 1-18 und 15, 11-20," *Biblische Notizen* 48 (1989): 21-49; H. von Lips, *Weisheitliche Traditionen im Neuen Testament* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 64; München: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990).

helm. This illusion, dismissed in sapiential texts as incompatible with experience, is shattered by God's announcement (12:20a).¹⁹³ The man appears to be on the brink of experiencing the same fate prescribed for the rich person (πλούσιος) in James, who will pass away like a flower of the grass, and fade away in the mist of his pursuits (Jas 1:10, 11).¹⁹⁴

The rich man's miscomprehension of the future, incidentally, resembles the attitude of Qoheleth when he initially lays out his program of enjoyment (Qoheleth 2). Additionally, the man's assumption that his goods will last for "many years" reveals no awareness of the sapiential insistence upon the ephemeral nature of possessions.¹⁹⁵ In Qoheleth, the perception of goods as divine gifts underscores their fragile and ephemeral nature. In light of Qoheleth, the rich man's neglect regarding the precarious nature of goods may be a direct consequence of failing to recognize them as a divine gift. Luke also highlights the fragility of possessions, illustrating, for example, the ease with which someone's goods can be taken away (10:30). Moreover, as 12:21a intimates, since the man's saving is only for himself, his primary concern is shown to be his own personal well being and security.

5.4.2 Ignoring Death's Inevitability, Uncertain Timing and Potential Imminence

The rich man's storage of goods can be read as lack of awareness of the possible imminence of his own death. If this is the case he differs sharply from the insistence in

¹⁹³ Dupont, *Les béatitudes*, 3:113, sees this contrast (between the man's envisioned future and God's announcement of his death) as a primary manifestation of the man's folly.

¹⁹⁴ Johnson, *James*, 186-87, cites Luke 12:16-21 as a parallel to the focus in James 1:9-12 on the transience and fragility of life.

¹⁹⁵ See, e.g., Lucian, *Tim.* 29; *Dial mort.* 21.4.

sapiential texts on the need to face one's mortality and prepare for death. Diogenes emphasizes the need to practice (μελετήσεως) how to die (*Ep.* 39.3, 13). Seneca repeatedly stresses the importance of facing one's inevitable death.¹⁹⁶ One must, throughout life, prepare to meet death (*Ep.* 82.8). Each day is to be regarded as one's last (*Ep.* 12.8-9; 93.6). Adopting this perspective would seem to preclude the saving of goods for the future. Lucian also finds fault with those who fail to reflect upon their mortality and inevitable death.¹⁹⁷ For Lucian, both the brevity of life and innumerable opportunities to die should cause one to reflect upon one's future death (*Char.* 17).

Sapiential texts also insist that an awareness of death's inevitability should inform one's use of possessions. Syriac Menander stresses that riches are used properly when done so in the consideration of the end of one's life (322-27). Ben Sira seems to assume that remembering the end of life will encourage giving to the poor and being generous with others (7:32-36). A failure to face one's mortality, on the other hand, prevents one from using possessions meaningfully. Lucian identifies the belief that one will live forever as the reason that some hoard money rather than giving it to their heirs (*Dial. mort.* 22.7). Forgetting about one's own mortality results in being possessed by one's mortal goods (*Men.* 12). Luke's rich man is indeed owned by what he owns (see 5.3.1), and his being possessed by his possessions may be due to his failure to contemplate his mortality.

Having wealth can also cause one to neglect one's own mortality. People who are doing well (εὖ πράττωσιν) do not think of the myriad ways that death might meet them

¹⁹⁶ *Ep.* 4.3-6, 9; 24; 58.23; 63.16; 67.8-10; 69.6; 70.9; 74.30; 76.28-29; 77.14-15, 19; 78.5-6; 80.5-6; 92.35; 93.12; 104.25, 33; 117.21; 120.14-15.

¹⁹⁷ See, e.g., *Dial. mort.* 3.2; *Char.* 17, 24; *Men.* 12.

(*Char.* 17).¹⁹⁸ For Lucian, reflecting upon one's mortality would lead people to alter certain behaviors regarding their possessions.¹⁹⁹ Thinking of one's inevitable death, and the impossibility of bringing possessions into the afterlife, enables people to cease their "vain toil" for possessions (*Char.* 20). The man's plans in the parable evince no such awareness of his potential demise. Seneca also maintains that an insatiable hunger for wealth makes it difficult for one to contemplate one's eventual death (*Ep.* 70.17-18). Craving wealth also causes people to attempt (unsuccessfully) to prolong their life (*Ep.* 120.17).

The discourse following the parable (12:22-34) also suggests a possible link between one's anxiety over possessions and an attempt to prolong one's life (12:22-26). This discourse, too, insists on the unavoidability of death. Flowers and grass perish (12:28), and one cannot prolong the length of one's days (12:25). Moreover, Luke 12 begins with Jesus acknowledging the reality that some people are killed (12:4-5).

In light of such texts, the man's foolish use of goods is a consequence of his failure to reckon with his inevitable death. In contrast to the neglect of his mortality, the parable insists through God's speech that death is an inevitable and unavoidable event, the timing of which is frequently unpredictable.²⁰⁰ Luke's insistence on the inevitability and unpredictable timing of death comports with views of many sapiential texts.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ Such people mistakenly think that their goods will be theirs forever (*Char.* 17).

¹⁹⁹ A person building a house would not continue if he knew that he will die as soon as the roof is complete (*Char.* 17).

²⁰⁰ For Bovon, *Saint Luc*, 257, the parable is an invitation to "remember that you must die." Dupont, *Les béatitudes*, 3:113, identifies the man's ignorance (*oublier*) of death as one reason for his folly. Eichholz, "Vom reichen Kornbauern," 187, identifies the man's refusal to face death as his "crucial error." Johnson, *Literary Function*, 153, notes that the man's fault is due in part to his failure to consider the possibility of his imminent death.

²⁰¹ The importance of facing death is an important motif in Luke's broader literary context. The parable and the discourse that precedes and follows it are spoken during the journey narrative in which

Some of the specific uses of possessions recommended in sapiential texts can also enable one to face one's own mortality. Producing a testament, for example, is a task that requires one to reflect on one's morality. By contrast, there is nothing inherent in the act of saving that requires the facing of one's inevitable death. Saving might entail facing a number of other possible contingencies or events, but not death's inevitability.

In Luke 12, meaningful living entails rejecting certain options for the use of possessions and adopting others. One is to reject the storage of a surplus of goods for the future, planning for the future, the pursuit of an inheritance, and solitary enjoyment. These uses of possessions are deemed meaningless in light of death's uncertain timing and potential imminence. A primary reason for their meaninglessness is their failure to enhance life (ζωή), either for themselves or others (12:15). In their failure to produce an unfailing treasure, these options also constitute a failure to be rich toward God (12:21).

5.5 Reconfiguring the Sapiential Conversation Regarding Death and Possessions

I have shown that Luke 12:13-21 rejects specific uses of possessions as meaningless in light of death's inevitability and uncertain timing. Luke's parable is prefaced with the twin motifs of inheritance and avarice, each of which figure prominently in sapiential discussions of death and possessions.²⁰² In Luke 12, Jesus rejects both of these options as meaningless. One's life does not consist in the abundance

Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem (9:51, 53), a destination synonymous with death in general (13:33-34) and with Jesus' death. The one who intimates that facing death is a prerequisite to living well is himself voluntarily walking a road whose ultimate end is his own death. On Jesus' willingness to face death, especially within the Greco-Roman context, see Gregory E. Sterling, "*Mors Philosophi: The Death of Jesus in Luke*," *HTR* (2001): 383-402; Peter J. Scaer, *The Lukan Passion and the Praiseworthy Death* (NTM 10; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005).

²⁰² On the motif of inheritance in sapiential discussions of death and possessions, see 5.2.5.2. On the motif of avarice in sapiential discussions of death and possessions, see 5.3.1.

of possessions (12:15). Luke's rejection of these options, and his espousal of one specific option (alms) represents his participation in this sapiential conversation regarding death and possessions.

Yet Luke not only participates in this conversation but also reconfigures it by appropriating certain motifs and adapting them to his own theological and existential concerns. We turn now to analyze two such examples.

5.5.1 The Dilemma of an Appropriately Acquired Surplus

Many sapiential texts criticize the unjust acquisition of wealth.²⁰³ Although such texts differ on many points, they find common ground on this issue.²⁰⁴ The evaluation of wealth is often dependent, as it is in Ben Sira, upon whether it was acquired justly or not.²⁰⁵ Riches are good, he avers, if they are free from sin (Sir 13:24a). Luke's parable provides no explicit indication that the rich man procured his goods through unjust means.²⁰⁶ On the contrary, the parable specifies that the man's goods are produced naturally from the land (12:16).²⁰⁷ The failure to attribute the man's wealth to unjust acquisition is significant given the prevalence of this motif in sapiential texts. It is therefore possible that Luke's parable addresses a distinct, albeit related, question. If wisdom texts are in general agreement that the unjust acquisition of goods is abhorrent, then what about the proper acquisition of goods? How is one to utilize goods and

²⁰³ See, e.g., *I En.* 97.8-10; Prov 15:27; Psalm 49; Jer 17:11; "The Instruction of Amenemope" (6-7); stela of Merneptah (*AEL* II:76); Ps.-Phoc. 5-6.

²⁰⁴ Wilson, *Pseudo-Phocylides*, 80, identifies this motif (the "theme of wealth unfairly acquired") as one that "belongs principally" to wisdom texts. As examples he cites Job 20:15; Prov 11:28; 13:11, 22; 28:8, 21-22; Wis 5:8; Sir 5:8; 13:24; 14:9; 21:4; 40:13.

²⁰⁵ So Wright, "Discourse," 564; cf. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 147.

²⁰⁶ So King, "Fool," Eichholz, *Gleichnisse*, 183; Bovon, *Saint Luc*, 253; Moxnes, *Economy*, 88; Verhey, *Remembering Jesus*, 270.

²⁰⁷ Moxnes, *Economy*, 83.

possessions that have not been procured unjustly? Luke reconfigures this sapiential motif regarding the unjust appropriation of goods by displaying a concern instead with what to do with possessions that are *appropriately* acquired.

The specific dilemma that faces the man in the parable is that of an appropriately acquired *surplus*.²⁰⁸ Unlike characters in parables that lack something,²⁰⁹ the quandary facing this individual is what to do with an abundance of goods. How does one handle a surplus of goods, possessions, or wealth? In particular, how does one respond to a surplus of goods given the inevitability and uncertain timing of death? In the Epistle of *1 Enoch*, God punishes those who acquire wealth unjustly (97:8-10). In Luke's parable, God is shown to demonstrate an interest in the man's use of a surplus of goods that he receives as a gift (12:20-21). Luke displays his interest in the issue of a surplus with his use of *πλεονεξία* (12:15), a term that denotes pursuit of a superfluous quantity.²¹⁰

The extravagance of the man's surplus is indicated by his need to tear down his existing barns since they cannot adequately contain the produce of his field (12:16-17). The concern regarding a surplus also appears in the comment immediately preceding the parable. The parable is prefaced with Jesus' contention that one's life does not consist in

²⁰⁸ Observations regarding the man's surplus frequently involve tendentious speculation. Mary Ann Beavis, "The Foolish Landowner," 64, maintains the rich man plans to store the goods in order to drive up the price of grain. Joel Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 490-91, thinks the man keeps his surplus so as to avoid saturating the market, and to receive a "higher price when the market is not glutted." For a similar view, see Charles Hedrick, *Parables as Poetic Fictions*, 156-57.

²⁰⁹ See, e.g., the parables of the widow and the unjust judge (18:1-8) or the Friend at Midnight (11:5-8).

²¹⁰ See Liddell-Scott, 1415-16; Gerhard Delling, "πλεονέκτης, πλεονεκτέω, πλεονεχία," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (vol 6; Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friederich, eds.; Geoffrey Bromiley, trans.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 266-74.

the abundance (περισεύειν) of possessions (12:15).²¹¹ The implication of this statement is that one's life consists in something other than a surplus of goods. The discourse following the parable contends that one's life consists not in maintaining a surplus but in selling one's goods and giving them in the form of alms (12:33). One is to sell the very thing (ὑπάρχοντα) in which one's life does not consist and give the proceeds to others. In so doing, one's possessions become life for others.

The parable's conclusion (12:21) draws attention to the motif of a surplus by likening (οὕτως) the rich man to one who "stores up for oneself (θησαυρίζων ἑαυτῷ) and is not rich (πλουτῶν) toward God" (12:21). This conclusion interprets the parable in three important ways. First, the use of ἑαυτῷ in 12:21 suggests that the man's plans to build larger barns, store his goods, and enjoy himself are focused entirely upon his own person. The compelling aspect of this reading is the solitary nature of the rich man, manifest in the absence of any reference to another person, his repeated use of singular verbs, and the repetition of the first person personal pronoun.²¹² The isolated nature of the man is highlighted by the parable's own use of ἑαυτῷ to describe the man's speech "to himself" (12:17). The use of ἑαυτῷ in 12:21 recalls this earlier use in the parable, further suggesting a link between the solitary nature of "treasuring," and the solitary plans of the rich man. Interpreting the man's plans as ones that only involve himself is significant given the emphasis throughout Luke on experiencing enjoyment, eating, and drinking in a communal context.

²¹¹ The subsequent reference to Solomon (12:27) would also bring to mind the surpluses required for the king's luxurious lifestyle.

²¹² As Bovon, *Saint Luc*, 245, notes, the rich man is "enclosed in himself (*enfermé en soi*)."

Second, the conclusion to the parable (12:21) argues that the act of treasuring for oneself (θησαυρίζων ἑαυτῷ) is tantamount to not being rich toward God.²¹³ Luke 12:21 evaluates the man's plans theologically, and considers them as a theological act.

Accordingly, the man's ostensibly economic plans do not have theological implications but rather constitute a theological endeavor. One who stores treasure for oneself, as the rich man does in the parable, lives in a state of poverty vis-à-vis God.²¹⁴ The principle underlying this theological evaluation of the man's plans is that an inverse relationship exists between one's relationship with God and one's selfish accumulation of goods. As one increases treasure for oneself, one simultaneously becomes poorer in relation to God.

Third, the negatively phrased statement (μὴ εἰς θεὸν πλουτῶν) (12:21b) invites reflection upon its positive corollary. If the man in the parable illustrates one who is not rich toward God, what does being rich toward God entail? The positive alternative appears in the penultimate line of the discourse (12:33). As in 12:21, there is in 12:33 both a reference to "treasure" (θησαυρός) and a reflexive pronoun (ἑαυτοῖς). Selling one's possessions (πωλέω) and giving alms (δίδωμι ἑλεημοσύνη) is the counter example, both to greed (12:15) and to treasuring goods for oneself (12:21). Instead of storing "for oneself" (12:21), one gives them away to others (12:33). Whereas storing treasure for oneself constitutes poverty toward God, selling possessions and giving alms is likened to purses that do not become obsolete, and an "unfailing treasure" (θησαυρὸν ἀνέκλειπτον) in heaven. It is unassailable by thief or moth, and cannot be stolen or destroyed (διαφθείρει). Its impregnability speaks to its "eternal" quality, and is a sharp

²¹³ So Bovon, *Saint Luc*, 258.

²¹⁴ This illustrates Johnson's insight, *Literary Function*, 155, that the "disposition of possessions is a sign of the response of the heart to God."

contrast to the treasure from which the rich man was so quickly and easily separated (12:20). Luke later makes a similar point, indicating that selling all one has (πωλέω) and giving to the poor (διαδίδωμι πτωχός) provides one with treasure (θησαυρός) in heaven (18:22).

An implication of this theological assessment in 12:21 is that the question of what to do with a surplus of goods represents an existential, ethical, and theological dilemma.²¹⁵ The existential nature of this quandary is a consequence of drawing attention to the sapiential texture of 12:13-34. The surplus provides an opportunity for the man to consider how to use his goods meaningfully especially in light of death's inevitability and uncertain timing. The ethical opportunity that the surplus represents becomes explicit with the proposal of alms as a constructive alternative to the socially destructive consequences of πλεονεξία. Finally, the failure to (plan to) share his goods with others is understood as a theological choice (12:21).

To be rich toward God is to share one's goods in the form of alms with those most in need.²¹⁶ The God with and to whom one is rich is the God described in the subsequent discourse, one whose care and provision enables one to give alms without worrying or being anxious.

5.5.2 God, Anxiety and the (Illusory) Control of One's Life and Possessions (12:22-34)

Luke reconfigures the sapiential conversation on death and possessions by identifying anxiety as an integral component in the intersection of possessions and

²¹⁵ *Contra* Sellew, "Interior Monologue," 244, who avers that the man merely faces a practical (not even a moral) dilemma. This view, though perhaps representing the perspective of the rich man at the outset of the parable, is at odds with the assessment Luke provides at the parable's conclusion.

²¹⁶ So Johnson, *Literary Function*, 155; idem, *Gospel of Luke*, 202.

death's inevitability and uncertain timing. Anxiety receives significant attention in the discourse addressed to the disciples (Luke 12:22-34).²¹⁷ The term *μεριμνάω* occurs three times (12:22, 25, 26), and *μετεωρίζομαι* appears once (12:29). But the importance of anxiety is indicated more pointedly by the way in which it governs the entire discourse (12:22-34). The concept appears in the discourse's initial instruction, "Do not worry ..." (12:22). The proceeding section (12:23-28) consists of warrants to buttress this command not to worry (12:22). The command not to worry is repeated (12:29), followed by another reason not to worry (12:30) and alternatives to pursue instead of worry (12:31-34). Moreover, the importance of anxiety for Luke 12:4-34 is indicated by the attention given to fear at the outset of this material (12:4-5), and Jesus' attempt to alleviate such anxiety (12:6-7).

Jesus concludes each of these sections by reminding the disciples not to worry (12:25, 29). Reasons not to be anxious include the inability of anxiety to prolong one's life (12:25). Jesus also suggests that worrying cannot effect change in other areas of one's life (12:26). The second reason not to worry (specifically about what one is to eat and drink) is that God ("the Father") is aware of peoples' needs (12:29-30). The implication is that the nations strive after such things because they are ignorant that God is aware of their needs (12:30).

²¹⁷ Johnson, "Kingship Parable," 145, notes the importance of whom Jesus addresses. See also A. Mosely, "Jesus' Audiences in the Gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke," *NTS* 10 (1963): 139-49. Jesus' audience in 12:13-34 shifts and Luke is not entirely clear about its makeup. In 12:1-12 Jesus speaks to the disciples (12:1), although it is clear that a crowd is also listening to these words (12:1, 13). In 12:14 Jesus addresses the brother, but in 12:15 speaks to a larger group (*αὐτούς*), either the crowd or the crowd and the disciples. The parable (12:16-21) is also told to this larger group (*αὐτούς*). The discourse in 12:22-34 is directed to the disciples (12:22). The ambiguity in identifying the precise audience is expressed by Peter who later asks if Jesus is speaking "this parable" (referent unspecified) to the disciples or to everyone (12:41). The parable and discourse on anxiety occur within a broader literary context (12:4-34) in which anxiety is of primary concern. This section begins with Jesus teaching about whom one should not fear (*φοβέομαι*) and whom one should fear (12:4-5).

Finally, an alternative is offered to anxiety in the twin forms of pursuing God's kingdom and selling one's possessions and giving alms (12:31, 33). The pursuit of the former will result in being given the very things one pursues and about which one worries (food, drink, clothing) (12:31). The Father is not only aware of needs but it is his "good pleasure to give" the kingdom (12:32b). This claim is offered as a reason for not fearing (12:32a). This command not to fear (μὴ φοβῶ) recalls Jesus' previous instruction (μὴ φοβηθῆτε) (12:4), and in 12:32 it functions as a prerequisite to selling one's goods and giving alms (12:33). The assumption is that an absence of fear regarding daily provision of food and drink (itself made possible by trusting that God's good pleasure is to give both these things and the kingdom) can free one to relinquish one's goods in the service of others (12:33).

This proposal to sell one's goods and give alms has an important literary function in that it represents an antithetical alternative to the rich man's actions in the parable. He collects, gathers, and saves instead of selling. Moreover, these acts are understood to be "for himself" and not for anyone else (12:21). He gives to no one else and he does not (apparently) plan on doing so.

The discourse on anxiety can be read as a rhetorical argument²¹⁸ culminating in the recommendation to sell one's goods and give alms. Most of this argument consists of warrants for the giving of alms. Giving alms is possible if one trusts that the Father will

²¹⁸ So Sondra Ely Wheeler, *Wealth as Peril and Obligation: The New Testament on Possessions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 62.

care for one's needs.²¹⁹ One can trust God to provide because of the divine care bestowed on nature, and the greater value that people have to God (12:24, 28).

Reading the parable in light of the discourse on God and anxiety is justified given their mutual proximity, the six lexical links they share (see 5.2.2), and the specific connecting device (διὰ τοῦτο, “on account of this,” 12:22). The advice in 12:22-34 functions not only as a corollary of the parable but also, with 12:13-15 and 12:21, as one of its interpretive lenses. The rich man in the parable exemplifies the antithesis of the lifestyle advocated in the subsequent discourse (trusting in God, selling one's goods, and giving alms). The rich man displays a concern with his future eating (ἐσθίω) (12:19), and Jesus tells the disciples not to worry about what they are to eat (ἐσθίω) (12:22, 29). In contrast to the man's plan to build larger barns (12:18), Jesus cites approvingly the absence of any barns among the ravens (12:24). Implied in the observation that God feeds the latter is an inability on the rich man's part to trust in God's provision (12:24b). The rich man's plans fail to prolong his life, a point Jesus also addresses (12:25).

These connections with the parable's literary context (12:22-34) invite reading 12:16-21 in light of sapiential conversations about anxiety. Anxiety is a motif in sapiential discussions of death and possessions, and it is possible that Luke draws upon this sapiential motif. Ben Sira links anxiety (μέριμνα) to the accumulation of wealth (χρῆμα) (Sir 31:1-3). Lucian identifies worrying (φροντίζω) over acquiring an inheritance as a cause of premature death (*Dial. mort.* 16.4). Syriac Menander also sees undue anxiety as a cause of death (385-93). Seneca frequently links anxiety with the

²¹⁹ So Johnson, *Literary Function*, 155: “Indeed, because of this most fundamental security, they are able to give away their possessions.”

pursuit of luxury.²²⁰ He claims that anxiety stymies enjoyment (*Ep.* 14.18), and he considers there to be a proportional relationship between one's "daily" worry and the measure of possessions one gains (*Ep.* 115.16). In Papyrus Insinger, God gives the "impious" person wealth so that he should worry daily (15.19). Other Egyptian texts eschew worry, recommending enjoyment instead.²²¹

When read in light of Luke 12:22-34, the rich man's response to the land's fruitful production can be understood as a manifestation of anxiety.²²² So also can the brother's interest in obtaining a share of the inheritance be regarded as a consequence of anxiety (12:13-15). Anxiety is embodied in specific practices and manifest, in these instances, in the pursuit of an inheritance and the plans to build larger barns and store goods for the future.²²³ Furthermore, these plans of the rich man evince a failure to trust in God's character as it is described by Jesus. The storage of goods for future use reveals a lack of trust that God will provide for his needs. This inability to trust in divine care is one reason that the rich man's plans constitute a poverty vis-à-vis God (12:21b).

I have argued previously that proposals for the use of possessions represent attempts to exert control given the uncontrollable facets of death (death's uncertain timing, inevitability, etc.). Sapiential recommendations for the use of possessions each function as a way to exert some level of control in the face of the loss of control that death poses. Luke 12:13-34 makes two important contributions to this conversation. First, it identifies the fragility and uncertainties of life (of which death is one significant aspect)

²²⁰ *Ep.* 14.18; 42.7; 115.16; 119.15.

²²¹ Statue of Nebneteru (*AEL* III:18, 21-24); Inscription of Wennofer (*AEL* III:56-57); cf. Ptahhotep (11; *AEL* I:66).

²²² So Caird, *St. Luke*, 163.

²²³ Plans that, admittedly, never come to fruition.

as a potential threat to one's sense of control. The fragility of life fuels anxiety which in turn stymies one's ability to live meaningfully. Anxiety hinders meaningful living since it leads to the pursuit and amassing of possessions, an activity that fails to engender life (ζωή) (12:15).

Second, Luke 12:13-34 suggests that almost any effort to secure control through the use of possessions is a futile enterprise.²²⁴ In Luke 12, enjoyment is not seen as an alternative to anxiety (*contra* Seneca) but as another possible symptom of it. Anxiety functions within this framework as the sole fruit of the otherwise fruitless quest to exert control over one's life, either through the attempt to postpone death or through specific uses of possessions. Luke's proposal of alms as a solution to anxiety is noteworthy precisely because this use of possessions most closely represents a relinquishing of the attempt to control life through one's goods. In sharp contrast to the many methods whereby one might collect and accrue goods as a means of securing control, Luke upholds a use of goods (alms) that requires letting go of control. Luke presents this precise use of goods as the vehicle through which one can store up treasure in heaven, thereby securing one's future relationship with God. As in Ben Sira, storing up riches does not "guarantee security."²²⁵ One rather achieves future security by relinquishing control of one's goods in the present. Such letting go of control is not an attitudinal detachment from possessions, as it is in Seneca, but a tangible selling and giving away of one's goods to the poor.

²²⁴ See Johnson, *Literary Function*, 153: "Possessions are what men use to preserve their life, to gain security against threat. But Jesus rejects this. The 'self' is not secured by possessions, and there is no correspondence between an increase in possessions and the state of a man's life."

²²⁵ Sir 11:10-11, 18-19, 20-21a, 23-24. So Harrington, *Ben Sira*, 39.

The parable suggests that greed is foolish because it harms both its owner, through the anxiety it produces, and others, through neglect. This focus upon the meaninglessness of avarice is a consequence of reading the parable in concert with sapiential texts.

5.6 Why the Man is (and is Not) Called a Fool

We have proposed that the man's folly is best understood in terms of his limited imagination (in failing to practice any sapiential recommendations for the use of possessions in light of death's inevitability); the selfish and socially isolating nature of his greed; his saving for the future (and underlying assumption regarding the control he wields over his future); and the neglect of his own mortality.

The benefit of reading Luke's parable in concert with sapiential texts is evident when one compares the insights generated from this practice with prevailing yet ultimately unsatisfying understandings of the parable. One of these is the claim that the man's folly is to be understood in light of Ps 14:1. Many interpreters treat the description of the man as a "fool" (ἄφρων, 12:20) as the parable's *crux interpretum*.²²⁶ As Eichholz maintains, the accusation of the man as a fool presents "the actual problem of the interpretation of our parable."²²⁷ Seeking to clarify what the parable leaves unspecified, interpreters aim to discover the reason why the man is called a fool. In what does the man's folly consist?

²²⁶ So Martin Luther King, "The Man Who Was a Fool," in *Strength to Love* (Martin Luther King, ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981): 69-76; Eichholz, *Gleichnisse*, 185; Allen Verhey, *Remembering Jesus: Christian Community, Scripture, and the Moral Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 108; cf. Dupont, *Les béatitudes*, 3:113.

²²⁷ Eichholz, *Gleichnisse*, 185.

Most interpreters follow Jeremias in reading the epithet “fool” in light of Ps 14:1a²²⁸ (“A fool [ἄφρων / נבל] said in his heart, ‘There is no God’), and conclude that the rich man either is some type of atheist, has forgotten God, or has no relationship with God.²²⁹ Reading the parable in light of Ps 14:1 thus leads interpreters to understand the man’s fault in (primarily) theological terms.²³⁰ There is nothing amiss with speaking of the man’s folly in theological terms. Luke 12:21 invites such a reading, as does God’s appearance in the parable, and the prominent attention to God in 12:22-34. References to these latter verses would indeed buttress the arguments of those who use Ps 14:1 as the hermeneutical key to the parable. But there are some problems with the assumption (usually asserted without argument) that the appellation “fool” is best understood in light of Ps 14:1.²³¹

First, the evidence for employing Ps 14:1 as an interpretive lens to the parable (both texts use the term “fool” and no mention is made in the parable of the rich man’s interaction with God) is paltry and, at best, circumstantial. The absence of an explicit reference to a relationship between God and the rich man is not sufficient evidence that he is an atheist or has disregard for God. The lack of a reference to God in 12:16-19 is typical of Lukan (and other synoptic) parables. Characters in these parables are not regularly depicted as relating to God and Luke 18:10-14 represents the sole exception.

²²⁸ Psalm 13:1 in LXX.

²²⁹ So Jeremias, *Parables*, 165; Danker, *Jesus*, 247-48; Tannehill, *Luke*, 206; Wiefel, *Evangelium nach Lukas*, 237; Wright, “Parables,” 222; Scott, *Re-Imagine*, 95; Snodgrass, *Stories*, 399.

²³⁰ Calvin, *Harmony*, 150-151, accuses the man of not relying on God alone. King, “Fool,” avers the man is a fool because he failed to recognize his dependence on God. Marshall, *Luke*: “The fool is the man who feels no need of God.” Danker, *New Age*, 247-48, claims the rich man forgets God. For Snodgrass, *Stories*, 399, “the man left God out of the picture.”

²³¹ It is puzzling that, despite its precise lexical parallel, Ps 53:2 (MT; LXX: 52:1) (“A fool said in his heart, ‘There is no God’”) has not been cited as a relevant text for Luke 12:20.

Furthermore, there is no indication that the only other instance of ἄφρων in Luke-Acts (Luke 11:40) should be read in light of Ps 14:1, nor has anyone suggested doing so.

Second, there are compelling reasons for reading the parable in light of this other use of ἄφρων in Luke 11:40.²³² In Luke 11:40, ἄφρων immediately follows a reference to rapacity (ἀρπαγή) (11:39), and immediately precedes a reference to alms (ἐλεημοσύνη) (11:41). The presence of these two motifs in Luke 12:13-34 invites reading each episode in light of the other. When the parable is read in light of 11:39-41, the rich man's folly consists of greed and a failure to give away his goods in the form of alms.

Third, and most important, no argument is advanced for selecting Ps 14:1 over other texts that use the term "fool." The arbitrary nature of the decision to understand Luke 12:19 through Ps 14:1 is curious given the polyvalence of the term "fool." Several Hebrew Bible texts, for instance, associate folly with improper or excessive speech.²³³ In light of such texts the man in the parable might be a fool because he speaks too frequently and before his time. God's explicit repudiation of the man's plans, that he will live for many years, might strengthen a case for such an argument. That the parable invites such a reading is just as unlikely as the argument for reading it in light of Ps 14:1.

In light of Qoh 5:3,²³⁴ the man's folly might consist in delaying to fulfill a vow to God. The parable gives no indication that the man either made or delayed a vow and there is good reason that no one has argued for reading the parable in light of Qoh 5:3. Yet there is just as little reason for reading the parable in light of Ps 14:1. Similarly,

²³² So Bovon, *Saint Luc*, 254, who cites 11:39-41 as an important context for understanding the parable.

²³³ Sir 20:7; Qoh 5:2; 10:14; Prov 10:8; cf. Sir 20:13; Qoh 10:12. See also Prov 6:12; 9:13; 10:18-19; 14:3; 15:2; 16:27; 17:7; 18:6-7; 19:1 (MT).

²³⁴ "Just as when you pray a vow to God, do not delay repaying it for [God] has no pleasure in fools" (LXX).

although folly is linked to adultery,²³⁵ anger,²³⁶ idolatry,²³⁷ and reviling God,²³⁸ there is no legitimate reason to assume that the rich man is guilty of any such activity. The myriad vices associated with the epithet “fool” demonstrate the arbitrary nature of selecting only one of these (Ps 14:1) as the definitive text for explicating Luke 12:19.²³⁹

Even more puzzling than the singular fixation on Ps 14:1 is the neglect of texts which associate “fool” with the misuse or abuse of possessions, a motif germane to the parable and its literary context. Jeremiah describes a person who makes wealth unjustly (οὐ μετὰ κρίσεως)²⁴⁰ but whose riches later abandon him, leaving him to be a fool (ἄφρων / לבל) in his last days (Jer 17:11). The man in the parable certainly finds himself on the verge of losing his possessions in his last days. Ben Sira claims that every fool (ἄφρων) is taken captive by gold, and that one’s obsession with the metal leads to ruin and destruction (Sir 31:5-7). Living in luxury (τρυφή) is not appropriate for a fool (ἄφρονι) (Prov 19:10). Whereas foolish men (ἄφρονες) swallow up a treasure (θησαυρός), the wise let it rest on their mouths (Prov 21:20). Qoheleth contrasts the fool (ἄφρων) with the rich (πλούσιοι) (Qoh 10:6). One might consider the man in the parable a fool since, rather than mourning, he plans on enjoyment (εὐφροσύνη), an activity that Qoheleth associates with the “heart of fools (ἄφρόνων)” (Qoh 7:4).²⁴¹

²³⁵ See, e.g., Prov 7:7-27; 18:22 (LXX).

²³⁶ Both θυμός (Qoh 7:9; Prov 29:11; Sir 31:30) and ὀργή (Prov 12:16; 27:3). Cf. also Prov 14:17, 29.

²³⁷ Wis 14:8-13; 15:4-6, 14-15.

²³⁸ Ps 74:18, 22.

²³⁹ For a more sober approach see Donahue, *Parable*, 178, who notes that the use of ἄφρων “recalls the wide OT polemic against ‘folly.’”

²⁴⁰ The analogy with the partridge (17:11a) suggests that the unjust amassing of wealth consists of taking it from others.

²⁴¹ “The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning and the heart of fools (καρδία ἀφρόνων) is in the house of enjoyment (εὐφροσύνης)” (Qoh 7:4).

More helpful explanations for what constitutes the man's folly are found when the parable is situated alongside wisdom texts that focus on the interplay of death and possessions.²⁴² For such texts offer specific proposals regarding how to use possessions given one's inevitable demise. Non-biblical sapiential texts also associate the term "fool" with an improper attitude towards, and use of, possessions. The Egyptian Instruction of Ankhsheshonq contains the following two statements in close proximity:

Even if filled with soap, a storehouse yields a profit (20.21; *AEL* III:175).
There is no fool who finds profit (21.8; *AEL* III:175).

Read in light of this pairing, the figure in Luke's parable can be understood as a fool because of his inability to yield a profit even when given ample opportunity by the production of his land and presence of numerous storehouses (12:18).²⁴³ At the time his death is announced (12:20), he has not yet found a profit from his land or storehouses. He has merely imagined it.

The Eighth instruction of *Papyrus Insinger* contrasts the fool with the wise person within the context of a series of sayings on gluttony:

The fool who does not control himself will be in want through gluttony (5.13).²⁴⁴
The fool who has power, what happens to him is bad (5.14).
It is the god who gives wealth; it is a wise man who guards <it> (5.15).
The virtue of a wise man is to gather without greed (5.16).
The great glory of a wise man is to control himself in his manner of life (5.17).
The fool is in bad odor in the street because of gluttony (5.18; *AEL* III: 189).

These sayings associate the fool with gluttony and insinuate, furthermore, that a fool is someone who gathers with greed (5:16). Each of these aspects of folly may be applied to

²⁴² Bovon, *Saint Luc*, 255, argues that it is "necessary to plunge into Hebrew wisdom" to understand the meaning of "fool" in 12:20.

²⁴³ The man is said to have "large barns" (Luke 12:18) and plans on building larger ones (12:18).

²⁴⁴ These sayings follow a warning that gluttony can lead to poverty (5.12).

the rich man in the parable. In light of this critique of gluttony, the rich man's folly is evident in his plan to eat, drink, and enjoy.²⁴⁵ The plans to tear down his barns and store his land's produce can be read as the acts of one who "gathers with greed" (5:16).²⁴⁶

If read in light of the following sayings in *Papyrus Insinger*, one might propose that gluttony contributed to the man's imminent death:

There is he who is weary from yesterday yet has a craving for wine (5.21).
[There is] he who dislikes intercourse yet <spends> his surplus on women (5.22).
[There is] he who dies in misery on account of gluttony (5.23).
[The] evil that befalls the fool, his belly and his phallus bring it (6.1; *AEL* III:189).

Seneca, on more than one occasion, associates folly with making plans for the future. He approvingly cites a saying of Epicurus, "The fool, with all his other faults, has this also,—he is always getting ready to live" (Frag. 494), and comments upon it:

Reflect ... what this saying means, and you will see how revolting is the fickleness of men who lay down every day new foundations of life, and begin to build up fresh hopes *even at the brink of the grave*. Look within your own mind for individual instances; you will think of old men who are preparing themselves at that very hour for a political career, or for travel, or for business (*Ep.* 13.16-17).²⁴⁷

The man Seneca describes, like the character in Luke's parable, takes time while on the brink of death to make plans for the future. In a separate letter, Seneca cites another saying of Epicurus, "The fool's life is empty of gratitude and full of fears; its course *lies*

²⁴⁵ For another link between the term "fool" and gluttony see *Pap. In.* 7.9 (*AEL* III:191).

²⁴⁶ On the other hand, the man's plans to protect the surplus of his field seems to comport with the description of a "wise man" as one who guards the wealth that God gives (5.15). The wisdom of his decision to store up goods for the future is evident in light of the later description in the Eighth Instruction of a fool as one who "forgets the morrow" and who "will lack food in it" (7.6). What remains debatable is whether the man gathers with or without greed (5:16).

²⁴⁷ Emphasis mine.

wholly toward the future” (*Ep.* 15.9, citing Frag. 491).²⁴⁸ Seneca follows this quote by noting:

And what sort of life do you think is meant by the fool’s life? ... he means our own, for we are plunged by our blind desires into ventures which will harm us, but certainly will never satisfy us; for if we could be satisfied with anything, we should have been satisfied long ago; nor do we reflect how pleasant it is to demand nothing, how noble it is to be contented and not to be dependent upon Fortune (*Ep.* 15.9-10).

Seneca faults the fool both for making future plans and also for insatiability.²⁴⁹

Lucian associates folly (μᾶταιος) with hoarding money for unrelated heirs and thinking that one will live forever (*Dial. mort.* 22.7). The man in Luke’s parable can with good reason be viewed as one who hoards and does not dwell upon the possible imminence of his death. Seneca links folly both with greed and the constant hope that one’s life will last as long as possible. In addition to not being satisfied with their income, such people “grasp at the utmost space of time to which the life of man can be extended” (*Ep.* 120.17).²⁵⁰ Seneca insists however that “we stand daily nearer the brink, and every hour of time thrusts us on towards the precipice over which we must fall” (*Ep.* 120.17-18).

As the above selections demonstrate, Ps 14:1 reflects one of many possible semantic associations for the term “fool.” Because this epithet encompasses such a plethora of diverse behaviors and attitudes, it is irresponsible to insist that Luke 12:19 be understood in light of only one of these. The association of “fool” with one who believes in his heart there is no God reflects a theological emphasis that comports with Ps 14:1

²⁴⁸ Emphasis mine.

²⁴⁹ The fool veers “from plan to plan” and is “inconsistent; nothing suits him for long” (Seneca, *Ep.* 52.1-2).

²⁵⁰ Seneca notes that fools believe that the transition to death is a “dangerous reef” (*Ep.* 70.2).

and may be influenced by von Rad’s definition of folly as “practical atheism.”²⁵¹ This definition of “fool” is unsatisfying, however, because it fails to recognize and utilize the numerous texts in which ἄφρων is linked explicitly to the (mis)use of possessions and death, two motifs central to Luke’s parable. Reading the parable in light of such texts provides a more richly textured and nuanced treatment of the characterization of the rich man. The rich man’s foolishness reflects not some type of atheism but rather a failure to utilize possessions properly, given the potential imminence of death.

5.7 Comparing Luke and Thomas

The distinctive elements and contributions of Luke’s parable are put into sharp relief when compared with the parallel version in the Coptic Gospel of Thomas.²⁵² Since our comparison makes extensive use of Thomas’s parable we will cite it in full:²⁵³

ΠΕΧΕ ΤC | ΧΕ ΝΕΥN ΟΥΡΩΜΕ ΜΠΛΟΥCΙΟC ΕΥNΤΔ4 ΜM|ΔΥ N2Δ2 NΧΡΗΜΔ ΠΕΧΔ4
 ΧΕ †NΔPΧPΩ N||NΔ ΧΡΗΜΔ ΧΕΚΔΔC ΕΕΙΝΔ ΧΟ NΤΔΩ[[2]]C2 | NΤΔΩCΕ NΤΔΜΟΥ2
 NNΔΕ2ΩP NΚΔP\|ΠΟC ΩΙΝΔ ΧΕ ΝΙP CΡΩ2 XΛΔΔΥ NΔΕΙΝΕ|NΕ4ΜΕΕΥΕ ΕΡΟΟΥ
 2M ΠΕ42HT\ ΔΥΩ 2N | ΤΟΥΩΗ ΕΤMΔΥ Δ4ΜΟΥ ΠΕΤΕΥM ΜΔΧΕ || MMΟ4\
 ΜΔΡΕ4\CΩTΜ

²⁵¹ Von Rad, *Wisdom*, 65.

²⁵² The comparison I undertake is primarily literary in nature and is not concerned with questions related to which version predated the other or whether the Thomas saying is authentic to the historical Jesus. For these and general introductory issues related to Thomas, see R. McL. Wilson, *Studies in the Gospel of Thomas* (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1960); H. E. W. Turner and Hugh Montefiore, *Thomas and the Evangelists* (Studies in Biblical Theology; Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1962); Gerant Vaughan Jones, *The Art and Truth of the Parables: A Study in Their Literary Form and Modern Interpretation* (London: SPCK, 1964), 230-40; Stephen J. Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas Within The Development of Early Christianity* (Ph.D. Diss.; Claremont Graduate University, 1988); Stephen J. Patterson and James M. Robinson, eds., *The Fifth Gospel: The Gospel of Thomas Comes of Age* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998); Jon Ma. Asgeirsson, April D. Deconick, and Risto Uro, eds., *Thomasine Traditions in Antiquity: The Social and Cultural World of the Gospel of Thomas* (Nag Hammadi & Manichaean Studies 59; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2006).

²⁵³ The Coptic text is from James Robinson, *The Coptic Gnostic Library: A Complete Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (vol 2; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 76-77. For questions regarding the dating of Thomas, see Robinson, 38-39. No Greek fragments are extant in Thomas for this saying.

Jesus said, ‘There was a rich man who had much money. He said, ‘I shall put my money to use so that I may sow, reap, plant, and fill my storehouse with produce, with the result that I shall lack nothing.’ Such were his intentions, but that same night he died. Let him who has ears hear’ (*Gos. Thom.* 63).²⁵⁴

Although the general outline of the story in the two versions is similar, there are few precise similarities that the two versions share in common.²⁵⁵ The main character in each is a “rich” (πλούσιος / ΠΛΟΥΣΙΟΣ) man who articulates plans for the future that involve storing the land’s produce in some type of storehouse. These plans are stymied, however, due to the man’s death (announced in Luke) later on that night. In neither version does the man demonstrate any awareness of his imminent death. In both cases he is preoccupied, immediately before dying, with plans related to his possessions. This is where most of the resemblances end.

The two parables exhibit far more differences than similarities and these divergences illuminate the distinctive voice and concerns of each version. These disparities include issues related to the sapiential discussion of death and possessions. Sapiential options for the use of possessions such as enjoyment, inheritance, and alms are lacking in Thomas.

Thomas evinces no overt interest in the motif of enjoyment. The sole ideal and ultimate goal of Thomas’s rich man is not rest, eating, drinking, nor enjoyment but self-

²⁵⁴ Translated by Thomas Lambdin in Robinson (ed.), *Coptic*, 77.

²⁵⁵ Jones, *Art*, 232, calls Thomas’s version an “abbreviated” form of Luke’s but does not call attention to any of the differences between the parables.

sufficiency.²⁵⁶ The envisioned result of his agricultural activities and filling his storehouse is that he will “lack nothing.”

The issue of inheritance, an important element in the literary context of Luke’s parable (12:13-15), is absent in the immediate context of *Gos. Thom.* 63. Thomas’s version of the dispute regarding inheritance (*Gos. Thom.* 72; cf. Luke 12:13-15)²⁵⁷ neither immediately precedes nor occurs in close proximity to the parable of the rich man.²⁵⁸ Even so, the question regarding the inheritance in Thomas lacks Luke 12:15, removing the explicit critique of avarice (πλεονεξία) which functions, in Luke, as the parable’s introduction and one of its interpretive lenses. Because both Luke and the Diatessaron place the episode of the inheritance dispute immediately prior to the Rich Fool parable, it is possible that Thomas separated the two pericopae.²⁵⁹ In any event, the absence of God’s question concerning the future status of the man’s possessions also removes inheritance from the parable’s purview.

The critique of greed which frames and introduces Luke’s version (12:15) is absent in Thomas. Neither do alms, Luke’s alternative solution and antidote to greed (Luke 12:33; cf. 11:39, 41), appear in (or in close proximity to) Thomas’s version. In short, Thomas addresses none of the sapiential recommendations regarding the use of possessions in light of death’s inevitability.

²⁵⁶ So Hugh Montefiore, “A Comparison of the Parables of the Gospel According to Thomas and of the Synoptic Gospels,” in idem and H.E.W. Turner, eds., *Thomas and the Evangelists* (SBT; vol. 1; London: SCM Press, 1962), 57; Snodgrass, *Stories*, 393.

²⁵⁷ For a comparison of *Gos. Thom.* 72 and Luke 12:13-14, see T. Baarda, “Text and Transmission,” 131-66.

²⁵⁸ Thomas’s version of the inheritance dispute (*Gos. Thom.* 72) reads as follows:

A [man said] to him, “Tell my brothers to divide my father’s possessions with me.”

He said to him, “O man, who has made me a divider?”

He turned to his disciples and said to them, “I am not a divider, am I?” The English translation is from Robinson, *The Coptic Gnostic Library* (vol 2), 81.

²⁵⁹ On the other hand, the Diatessaron might reflect influence from Luke or Luke’s source.

A significant difference between the two is that Luke's version provides (by virtue of its immediate literary context) constructive proposals (alms, giving to God) for how one might use goods. Luke's rich man failed to do anything with his goods but he at least intended to enjoy them. Although the goal of self-sufficiency in Thomas's version does reflect certain sapiential emphases,²⁶⁰ it does not reflect sapiential recommendations that occur in discussions of death. Ben Sira frames his warning against self-sufficiency within a discussion of the uncertain timing and potential imminence of death (Sir 11:24).

The crisis of the land's abundant production which introduces and frames Luke's parable is absent in Thomas.²⁶¹ The dilemma in Luke, as identified by the rich man, is the lack of adequate storage for the abundant fruits (12:16), leading him to ask what he should do (12:17). The man recognizes that he "does not have where he will gather together his crops" and his proposed resolution (tearing down his barns and building larger ones) addresses this lack of storage capacity (12:17-18).

Nor is there in Thomas's version a catalyst for the man's plans for his money, aside from the fact that he has much of it. In Thomas, the man's intentions appear not in response to a specific event as in Luke but rather *ex nihilo*. It is as though we meet Thomas's man *in media res*, without being properly introduced to the setting of the story. Thomas' sayings generally lack a narrative frame but his capability of providing them is evident in the two parables immediately following that of the Rich Fool. The parable of the Banquet (*Gos. Thom.* 64) contains the same type of narrative frame one finds in the Synoptic parallels (Matt 22:1-10; Luke 14:16-24). The parable of the Vineyard Owner

²⁶⁰ Proverbs warns that those who are lazy are in danger of becoming poor (Prov 6:6-11; 10:4; 28:19).

²⁶¹ The crisis facing the man concerns how he should respond to the land's abundant production. The man identifies his lack of storage capacity for the new fruits as his dilemma.

(*Gos. Thom.* 65) likewise includes a narrative frame that parallels those in the Synoptics (Mark 12:1-9; Matt 21:33-41; Luke 20:9-16).²⁶² Other sayings in Thomas also include some type of narrative introduction.²⁶³ The absence of a specific reason for Thomas's character to put his wealth to use might make it more difficult for readers/hearers to empathize or sympathize with him. Luke's character, on the other hand, finds himself in a specific predicament (the land's abundant production and corresponding lack of adequate storage space) that might enable readers/hearers to imagine themselves in the same (or similar) quandary.

Whereas Luke's character questions what course of action he should take (τί ποιήσω) (12:17), the man in Thomas proceeds without any similar query. Because the rich man in Thomas never questions what he might or will do, there is less opportunity for readers/hearers to put themselves in his place. Any crisis or predicament that might involve (and invite from readers/hearers) an imagined range of potentially disparate responses is absent. The man's question in Luke 12:17 creates the possibility for narrative tension and suspense. The repetition of τί ποιήσω in key moments of Luke's narrative²⁶⁴ has prepared the reader/hearer to expect some type of dénouement. The rich man's question provides the opportunity for the reader/hearer to ask themselves the same question. The reader/hearer is invited to consider what course of action the rich man will undertake in response to the crisis of a surplus. Thomas's conclusion ("Let him who has

²⁶² These three parables in Thomas (63, 64, 65) may have been placed together because of the common word ΡΩΜΕ (ἄνθρωπος). Sayings 64 and 65 both have the word ΖΜ2ΛΛ (δούλος). Montefiore, *Thomas*, 70, claims sayings 64 and 65 are linked together because of their shared "warning about the dangers of materialism."

²⁶³ *Gos. Thom.* 6, 12, 13, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24, 37, 43, 51-53, 60, 61, 79, 91, 99, 100, 104, 113, 114.

²⁶⁴ Luke 3:10, 12, 14; 10:25; 16:3; 18:18, 41; 20:13, 15; Acts 2:37; 4:16; 22:10.

ears hear”) is an explicit invitation for readers to reflect upon the parable and its meaning, but not necessarily to identify with the character of the rich man.

The two versions describe the rich man’s death differently. Thomas relates the man’s death in the past tense: “he died (ἄφθονος).” It is an event that marks the conclusion both to the parable and to the man’s life. Luke’s version, in contrast, announces the man’s death as a future (albeit imminent) event. Though announced, it has not yet taken place. This difference is potentially significant for it raises the question of how much time Luke’s character might have between his imminent death and the announcement of such. It is possible that the character in Luke’s version might respond to the announcement by disposing of his goods in a certain manner. The announcement of a future death also enables (and potentially encourages) the reader/hearer of the parable to consider one’s own mortality and, in the light of death’s inevitability, how one might utilize one’s goods.²⁶⁵ The declaration in Thomas’s version that the man died eliminates any possibility that he altered his behavior regarding the use of his goods. Also removed, or made more difficult, is the opportunity for readers/hearers to place themselves in the position of the rich man and consider the use of their goods in light of the potential imminence of death.

Thomas’s conclusion differs from Luke’s in that its sole concern is the man’s death. No interest is expressed regarding the ongoing life of the possessions of the rich man. Thomas’s concern for the possessions ends with the death of the rich man. The question of the use of possessions plays a greater role in Luke’s version than in

²⁶⁵ Stephen J. Patterson, *Gospel of Thomas*, 105, claims the presence of God’s announcement in Luke “makes explicit that which the Thomas version leaves to be discerned by the perceptive reader.”

Thomas's. Of greater concern in Thomas is the handling of money.²⁶⁶ Both versions describe the man as "rich" (πλούσιος / ἄπλοῦς) but only Thomas adds that he also had "much money (ἄλλο χρῆμα)." In Thomas's version, furthermore, the man plans to put his money (χρῆμα) to use. Luke's parable evinces instead an interest in the use of goods, those things that the land produced.

In Luke, the man's plans for storage result from a surplus of goods. In Thomas, however, the man plans to use his wealth in order to *create* a surplus. In Luke the land produces abundantly whereas in Thomas the man works the land (sowing, planting, reaping) *so that* it will produce abundantly. Thomas depicts a man who partners with (or manipulates?) the land to secure a surplus. The abundant production of the land in Luke seems to be more of a (surprising) gift to the rich man. Luke's version stresses the *gifted* nature of the land in a way that Thomas does not. Thomas's version, on the other hand, stresses the manner in which the man becomes a partner and co-worker with the land in its production of goods.

Luke's focus on the appropriate acquisition of a surplus is more evident when compared with Thomas. Luke clarifies the source of (some of) the rich man's possessions by informing us that his land produced abundantly (12:16a). This clarification is important given the regularity with which texts from Luke's milieu deride the unjust acquisition of wealth, and issue proscriptions against it.²⁶⁷ As I previously noted, the Epistle of *1 Enoch* assumes that all rich people have acquired their wealth unjustly. *Thomas's* failure to identify the source and means of the rich man's wealth, in light of

²⁶⁶ Hugh Montefiore, *Thomas*, 54, ft. 1, describes the concern in Thomas' version to be about "the dangers of commercial success."

²⁶⁷ Ps.-Phoc. 5.

this pervasive critique, leaves open the question whether or not his wealth was justly or unjustly acquired. Such a question would be of interest to a reader of the parable who was familiar with texts that deplore those who procure their wealth unjustly.

The presence of God as a character in Luke's parable is a striking difference with Thomas. The divine speech in Luke's version shows God to be especially interested in the man's plans for his goods. God's important function is evident not only in his appearance as a literary character but also in the parable's conclusion (Luke 12:21). Whereas Thomas leaves readers/hearers to consider for themselves what the parable might mean ("Let him who has ears hear"), Luke identifies the man's storage of goods as an act of greed that constitutes poverty toward God (Luke 12:15, 21). The absence of Luke 12:21 in Thomas (and codex Bezae of Luke's version) removes the insistence in Luke that the man's storage of goods is simultaneously an ethical and theological act.²⁶⁸

5.8 Conclusion

Luke's parable of the rich fool is not a *Beispielzählung*,²⁶⁹ merely providing a negative example to be avoided. Nor is it simply a "critique of the rich."²⁷⁰ The parable and its immediate literary context participate, reconfigure, and illustrate a highly contested sapiential conversation regarding the meaningful use of goods given life's fragility and death's inevitability, uncertain timing, and potential imminence. Luke 12:13-34 reconfigures sapiential motifs by revealing a keen interest in the use of goods

²⁶⁸ Given the external evidence for its inclusion, Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 135, considers the absence of 12:21 in Codex Bezae and some old Latin versions to be "accidental."

²⁶⁹ Contra Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*, II:viii; Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 177-78; Seng, "Der Reiche Tor," 140-41; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 971; Wiefel, *Lukas*, 236; Crossan, *In Parables*, 83; Bovon, *Saint Luc*, 245.

²⁷⁰ Tuckett, *Luke*, 96.

that are justly acquired, and how to use these goods meaningfully given the uncontrollable aspects of death such as its timing. In light of the potential imminence of death, Luke 12:13-34 rejects as meaningless the pursuit of an inheritance, solitary enjoyment, and the storage of goods for one's own future use.

The parable and its immediate literary context not only eschew these uses of possessions but also champion a specific way of using goods. In light of death's inevitability and uncertain timing, Luke proposes alms as the optimal way to use possessions meaningfully. Alms are meaningful precisely in the context of death as an inevitable event whose timing is unpredictable. Alms are the primary antidote and alternative to greed and anxiety, vices which are manifest in social isolation and a selfish storage of goods for future use. Because giving alms provides one with an "unfailing treasure in heaven," it is meaningful not only for the poor to whom it is given, but also for the one who gives it.²⁷¹ Giving alms is the primary way of being rich toward God, and is, in light of death's inevitability, uncertain timing, and potential imminence, the most meaningful option for the use of one's goods.

Proposing alms as the most fitting use of one's goods, given these uncontrollable facets of death, exemplifies Luke's participation in the (predominantly sapiential) conversation on death and possessions. No less important are the multiple ways in which Luke reconfigures aspects of this conversation by adapting sapiential motifs for his own existential, ethical, and theological interests. In doing so, Luke demonstrates both his indebtedness to sapiential discourse, and the wealth of his own literary and theological creativity.

²⁷¹ So Wheeler, *Wealth as Peril*, 63-64.

5.9 Further Implications

5.9.1 Luke's Parables as Sapiential Narratives

This chapter demonstrates that the category *Beispeilerzählung* fails to capture or reflect adequately the rich texture of Luke 12:16-21. Classifying the parable as an “example narrative” mischaracterizes it because it only sees in the parable a warning against a certain behavior – in this case greed. But the parable evinces an interest in *why* such behavior is problematic, and suggests that it is within a specific context (life's fragility, and death's inevitability, uncertain timing, and potential imminence). As with many wisdom texts, the parable reflects on the kind of action that is appropriate for a specific “time” or situation.²⁷² Luke 12:16-21 reflects a wrestling with fundamentally existential questions related to the meaningful use of possessions in light of the aforementioned aspects of death. Luke's concern for questions related to meaningful living may prove to be a fruitful way of thinking about and analyzing his other parables.

Other Lukan parables display an interest in the interplay of death and possessions. This twinned motif appears most explicitly in Lazarus and the Rich Man (16:19-31) and the Unjust Steward (16:1-8). Parables such as the Samaritan (10:30-36) and the Father and Two Sons (15:11-32) also reflect a concern, albeit more implicitly, with the use of goods within the context of a particular aspect of death. An analysis of these parables would provide a more nuanced and complete picture of Luke's attitude toward enjoyment, alms, luxury, saving for the future, generosity, hospitality, and inheritance.

²⁷² See, e.g., von Rad, *Wisdom*, 139.

Luke explores each of these options as potential vehicles of meaning given the uncontrollable facets of death.

Common to many wisdom texts is a concern for negotiating where meaning is (and is not) located. James VanderKam, for example, defines wisdom literature as texts that "grapple in a more universal way with the meaning of life, with life's perplexities, and with how to live it properly."²⁷³ Others have also observed the interest that wisdom texts have with living meaningfully.²⁷⁴ Luke's parables are similarly concerned with meaning and questions related to meaningful living. By "meaning" I refer to the symbolic domain from which people derive, and to which people ascribe, significance.²⁷⁵ Although this "search for meaning" is first and foremost an existential endeavor,²⁷⁶ it is inextricably bound up in Luke with ethical and theological concerns.

Luke's parables address the intersection of two specific motifs, death and possessions, each of which plays a significant role in the meaning that people construct for their lives. The interplay of these two motifs is not only a theme in Luke, but also an

²⁷³ James C. VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids / Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2001), 115. Arguments regarding the definitions, boundaries, and chief characteristics of wisdom literature are manifold and complex. James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 19, defines wisdom literature as a marriage between the form ("proverbial sentence or instruction, debate, intellectual reflection") and content ("self-evident intuitions about mastering life for human betterment, gropings after life's secrets with regard to innocent suffering, grappling with finitude, and quest for truth concealed in the created order and manifested in Dame Wisdom") of wisdom. See Crenshaw, 11-25, for a fuller discussion. For various types of wisdom see Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology. Vol. I: The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions* (trans. by D. M. G. Stalker; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1962), 418-59. Brueggemann, "Crisis," 86, describes wisdom as "the deposit of the best observations coming from a long history of reflection on experience"

²⁷⁴ See, e.g., Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 67; Gammie, "From Prudentialism to Apocalypticism," 482. It is noteworthy in this regard that Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 116, entitles his chapter on Ecclesiastes, "Chasing After Meaning."

²⁷⁵ Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 434, claims that the "imposition of meaning on life is the major end and primary condition of human existence."

²⁷⁶ Victor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1985), 136, argues that a person's primary concern is "to see a meaning in his life."

important element of the narrative's rhetoric. By illustrating options for the use of possessions within the context of death's potential imminence and a postmortem judgment, Luke's parables engender reflection on the relative meaningfulness (or lack thereof) of disparate uses of possessions. This interest in meaningful living is not unlike Nussbaum's understanding of the goal of Hellenistic philosophy as "human flourishing, or *eudaimonia*."²⁷⁷

Luke's parables share this interest, displayed in sapiential texts and Hellenistic philosophy, in meaningful living, and illustrate it through the vehicle of narrative. His parables construct imaginative worlds in which the use of possessions is evaluated in light of life's fragility, death's inevitability, and a postmortem judgment. As narratives, Luke's parables illustrate sapiential concerns for meaning, and provide the opportunity for literary characters and readers/hearers of Luke-Acts to evaluate their own use of possessions in light of the world constructed in the parable. For Luke, certain uses of possessions stymie one's capacity to live meaningfully. By contrast, other ways of using possessions enhance one's ability to live meaningfully.

In Luke's parable of the rich fool, this existential search for meaning is inseparable from ethical and theological concerns. The selfish storage of goods is deemed meaningless because it fails to include others, and this failure is considered poverty towards God. The use of alms is meaningful, by contrast, precisely because it enhances life of the giver and the recipient(s), and this act constitutes riches toward God.

²⁷⁷ Nussbaum, *Therapy of Desire*, 15, underscores the emphasis of *eudaimonia* on "completeness of life," and prefers to translate the term as "human flourishing."

Luke's parables thus function simultaneously as narratives of disorientation and reorientation.²⁷⁸ Both of these functions are important. On the one hand, Luke's parables deconstruct certain behaviors (e.g., solitary enjoyment, selfish storage of goods for the future, neglect of suffering), revealing them to be inadequate sources of meaning. Yet parables do much more than merely subvert. They construct worlds of possibility which by their very nature invite others to consider alternative ways of living. In particular, Luke's parables envision alternative ways of using possessions (e.g., hospitality, alms, generosity, and communal enjoyment). Luke's parables illustrate a rhetorical argument that these are meaningful uses of possessions, especially given one's inevitable death and postmortem judgment. It is precisely the context of death's uncertain timing, potential imminence, and postmortem judgment that makes these uses more meaningful than solitary enjoyment and saving for one's own future use.

Sapiential elements have been observed in the synoptic gospels,²⁷⁹ and Jesus has been called a "teacher of aphoristic wisdom."²⁸⁰ Indeed, Origen preferred "Wisdom" as the most appropriate title for Jesus.²⁸¹ Most scholarly attention on wisdom and the gospels has neglected Luke, focusing rather on John,²⁸² Q,²⁸³ or Matthew.²⁸⁴

²⁷⁸ On these terms, see Paul Ricoeur, "Biblical Hermeneutics," *Semeia* 4 (1975), 114-124; idem, *Conflict of Interpretations* (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1974), 369-70. For an application of these terms to the Psalms, see Walter Brueggemann, "Psalms and the Life of Faith: A Suggested Typology of Function," *JSOT* 17 (1980), 5-21.

²⁷⁹ Rudolf Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 69-108; William A. Beardslee, "The Wisdom Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels," *JAAR* 35 (1967): 231-40; idem, *Literary Criticism of the New Testament* (Philadelphia, 1970), 30-41.

²⁸⁰ James G. Williams, *Proverbs*, 16. See also Burton L. Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

²⁸¹ Origen, *Commentary on John* 1.109-124. Origen cites other titles for Jesus (e.g., Word, Life, Truth) but he favors "Wisdom."

²⁸² G. MacRae, "Gnosticism and the Church of John's Gospel," in *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity* (C. W. Hedrick and R. Hodgson, eds.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1986), 84-96, sees a "wisdom theology" in John's Gospel.

Luke's gospel, however, is replete with sapiential language, and he employs the term σοφία with more regularity than Mark or Matthew.²⁸⁵ Luke is alone among the Synoptics in personifying Wisdom and attributing speech to her (Luke 11:49). Luke also makes use of other sapiential terms such as φρόνησις,²⁸⁶ σύνεσις,²⁸⁷ σόφος,²⁸⁸ and φρόνιμος.²⁸⁹ Luke consistently portrays wisdom positively,²⁹⁰ and in the gospel it is most frequently applied to Jesus.²⁹¹

My study has suggested that Luke's parables can be profitably read as sapiential narratives. My reading has focused on one specific sapiential motif within these narratives, the interplay of death and possessions. Although not exclusive to other modes

²⁸³ James M. Robinson, "Jesus as Sophos and Sophia: Wisdom Tradition and the Gospels," in *Aspects of Wisdom in Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed Robert L. Wilken; Notre Dame/London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975) 1-16; James M. Robinson and Helmut Koester, *Trajectories through Early Christianity* (Philadelphia, 1971), 71-113. For the identification of wisdom as the earliest stratum of the Q tradition, see Helmut Koester, "Gnomai Diaphorai: The Origin and Nature of Diversification in the History of Early Christianity," in Robinson and Koester, *Trajectories*, 138; John S. Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 317; cf. Mack, *Myth of Innocence*, 59.

²⁸⁴ M. Jack Suggs, *Wisdom, Christology, and Law in Matthew's Gospel* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970). Blenkinsopp, *Wisdom and Law*, 181, claims that Matthew, more than any other canonical gospel, presents Jesus "as wise teacher." For attention to the Sermon on the Mount as a wisdom text, see Bernard Brendan Scott, "Jesus as Sage: An Innovative Voice in Common Wisdom," in *Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (ed. John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 399; Robert A. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Waco: Word, 1982) 323; Walter T. Wilson, "A Third Form of Righteousness: The Theme and Contribution of Matthew 6.19-7.12 in the Sermon on the Mount," *NTS* 53 (2007): 303-24.

²⁸⁵ The term σοφία occurs ten times in Luke-Acts (six in Luke, four in Acts). It appears only once in Mark (6:2) and only three times in Matthew (11:19; 12:42; 13:54). It does not occur in John. In Acts, wisdom is attributed to the seven men chosen to supervise the distribution of food to the widows (Acts 6:3); Stephen (6:10); Joseph (7:10); and Moses (7:22).

²⁸⁶ This term only appears twice in the NT (Luke 1:17; Eph 1:8). On nine occasions in the LXX the term translates חכמה.

²⁸⁷ Luke 2:47. This term appears six other times in the NT. On four occasions in the LXX the term translates חכמה.

²⁸⁸ Luke 10:21.

²⁸⁹ Luke 12:42; 16:8. This term translates חכמה once in the LXX.

²⁹⁰ Luke does not exhibit any of the cautionary or critical tone towards wisdom that one finds, for example, in Paul (1 Cor 1:17-19; 2:1, 4, 13; 2 Cor 1:12). Nor does Luke distinguish, as does Paul, between "worldly" and godly wisdom (1 Cor 1:20-21; 2:5-7; 3:19).

²⁹¹ It is twice used in descriptions of his development as a child (2:40, 52); Jesus' wisdom is greater than that of Solomon (11:31); and Jesus passes his wisdom on to the disciples (21:15).

of thought (e.g., prophetic or apocalyptic), wisdom may prove to be one heuristic lens for illuminating other episodes and motifs in Luke-Acts.²⁹²

5.9.2 Parables and Character Formation

Specific types of wisdom literature have been characterized as “instructional,”²⁹³ and character formation has been recognized as an important component of wisdom instruction.²⁹⁴ Many of the sapiential texts surveyed in this dissertation reveal an interest in shaping character, particularly in regards to the meaningful use of possessions. An underlying premise of many such texts is that people are capable of adopting certain uses of possessions, and eschewing other uses. Luke’s parables seem to share this basic anthropological assumption. He depicts characters who make specific choices in regard to possessions, and he constructs a narrative that encourages the evaluation of the character’s choice(s).

Luke’s illustration and evaluation of characters’ choices is a vehicle through which he facilitates character formation in his own readers and hearers. Luke’s parables invite readers/hearers into contested sapiential conversations in which choices about possessions figure prominently. Luke illustrates his interest in the intersection of death

²⁹² Lohfink, *Qoheleth*, 16-17, for instance, has identified several similarities between the thought of Qoheleth and the depiction of Jesus. Both, for example, conceive of God as a being who gives to people regardless of their moral status (Luke 6:35c). Although Qoheleth and Luke both share this view of God, it functions in the latter as a warrant for *imitatio Dei*, namely being kind to the wicked (Luke 6:35a-b).

²⁹³ Some, e.g., Kenton L. Sparks, “The Song of Songs: Wisdom for Young Jewish Women,” *CBQ* 70/2 (2008), 284, consider “instruction” to be the “chief purpose of wisdom texts.” Many consider “instruction” to be a particular type of wisdom literature, finding expression, for example, in Ben Sira (Burkes, *God, Self, and Death*, 160-61). Gammie, “From Prudentialism to Apocalypticism,” 480, considers “instruction” to be one of the two types of parenetic wisdom literature (e.g., Proverbs 1-9). Cf. Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 10.

²⁹⁴ Ronald E. Clements, *Wisdom in Theology*, 34-35, identifies character formation as a “primary goal of wisdom.”

and possessions through the specific vehicle of characterization.²⁹⁵ Numerous characters in Luke-Acts are chiefly described in terms of their experience with death and their use (or misuse) of possessions.²⁹⁶ Portraying the sapiential conversation on death and possessions in the form of narrative enables his own readers and hearers to see themselves reflected in the actions and choices that his literary characters make.

Some of the differences between the Rich Fool parable in Luke and Thomas highlighted ways in which Luke's version more easily facilitates opportunities to identify with the character of the rich man. A specific literary device Luke employs to construct both character identification and formation is the phrase τί ποιήσω ("what might/shall/must I do?").²⁹⁷ In seven cases, the phrase τί ποιήσω is used to describe a potential use of possessions,²⁹⁸ and in each instance the response to τί ποιήσω includes an illustration or teaching related to a specific use of possessions.²⁹⁹ The implicit

²⁹⁵ By "characterization," I refer to a narrative's depiction of specific characters. On the distinction between the terms "character" and "person," see Gail R. O'Day, "The Citation of Scripture as a Key to Characterization in Acts," in *Scripture and Traditions: Essays on Early Judaism and Christianity in Honor of Carl R. Holladay* (ed. Patrick Gray and Gail R. O'Day; Supplements to Novum Testamentum; Leiden: Brill, 2008): "To speak of characters in any literary work, ancient or modern, is never to speak of persons, even if the character in question, as is the case in Acts, is based on a historical personage. Literary works have characters, not persons; the world has persons, but not characters. To read characters as if they were persons robs the literary character of its function and distinctive voice in its literary home." On characterization in Luke-Acts, see John A. Darr, *On Character Building: The Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in Luke-Acts* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992).

²⁹⁶ These include, for example, Judas (Luke 22:4-5; Acts 1:16-20), Ananias and Saphira (Acts 5:1-11), and John the Baptist (Luke 3:7-9, 12-14; 7:25)

²⁹⁷ The question τί ποιήσω (and its various forms) occurs in key episodes throughout Luke's narrative. The crowds respond to Peter's preaching by asking τί ποιήσωμεν (Acts 2:37). The owner of the vineyard decides to send his son, after asking τί ποιήσω (20:13). Saul responds to the risen Jesus by asking τί ποιήσω (Acts 22:10). For other uses of τί ποιήσω in Luke-Acts, see Luke 18:41; 20:13.

²⁹⁸ Luke 3:10, 12, 14; 10:25; 12:17; 16:3; 18:18. The crowds respond to John's preaching on repentance by asking what they should do (τί οὖν ποιήσωμεν) (3:10). The tax collectors and soldiers respond similarly, each asking the same question (τί ποιήσωμεν) (3:12, 14). The lawyer asks Jesus, τί ποιήσας ζωὴν αἰώνιον κληρονομήσω, which serves as the catalyst for the parable of the Samaritan (10:25). The same exact question (τί ποιήσας ζωὴν αἰώνιον κληρονομήσω) reappears on the lips of the rich ruler (Luke 18:18). The steward asks τί ποιήσω when faced with losing his job (16:3).

²⁹⁹ John instructs the crowds, tax collectors, and soldiers concerning the giving and taking of specific possessions (food, clothing, money) (3:10, 12, 14). The rich man decides to build larger barns, and

assumption underlying each of the above questions and responses is that a possibility exists for the questioner (the literary character) to live into the answer proposed in the narrative. It is possible, in other words, for John's audience to share their food and clothing with the poor (cf. 3:10-14). So too can the lawyer share his goods and offer hospitality to those in need (cf. 10:37). The rich ruler is capable of selling all his goods and giving to the poor (cf. 18:22).

Luke's readers/hearers are simultaneously invited to adopt these specific uses of possessions illustrated in the narrative. This process begins with Luke's readers/hearers making the question "what would I do?" their own, and reflecting upon how they might use possessions meaningfully. Luke's parables thus serve a dual function: they construct both alternative worlds of meaningful living, as well as characters and communities capable of inhabiting and embodying these alternative worlds.

The world imagined in Luke's parables is one in which possessions are used meaningfully when they serve relational ends.³⁰⁰ The descriptions of the communities in Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-35 function literarily as a realization of this imagined world.³⁰¹ Luke imagines this world for his literary characters and readers/hearers, and he invites them to live into it by going about the hard work of constructing this world for themselves and their communities.³⁰² Luke's parables propose that the actualization of

anticipates the future enjoyment of his goods (12:17-19). The steward implements his plan to reduce debts that others owe his master (16:3). Jesus' reply to the lawyer details the Samaritan's generous sharing of goods and money on behalf of the wounded man (10:25). The rich ruler is told to sell all he has and give to the poor (18:22).

³⁰⁰ This preference for the relational use of possessions explains, in part, the steward is praised for reducing the amount that debtors owe to his master (16:1-8a).

³⁰¹ Acts 2 and 4 describe the beginnings of a structure that allows for the implementation of some of the teaching and illustration about possessions in Luke.

³⁰² These two episodes signal Luke's interest in the construction of communities, and not only individuals.

this imagined world is an act whose meaning is not only maintained in the face of the uncertain and uncontrollable aspects of death, but even enhanced in this specific context.

Bibliography

- Aalen, Sverre. "St. Luke's Gospel and the Last Chapters of 1 Enoch." *NTS* 13 (1966-67): 1-13.
- Abrams, M. H. "Orientation of Critical Theories." Pages 3-29 in *The Mirror and the Lamp*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1953.
- Aland, Barbara, Kurt Aland, Eberhard Nestle, and Erwin Nestle, eds. *Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*. 27th ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993.
- Aland, Barbara, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger, eds. *The Greek New Testament*. 4th rev. ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993.
- Allison, Dale C. *Testament of Abraham*. CEJL. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2003.
- Anat, M.A. "The Lament on the Death of Humanity in the Scroll of Qohelet." *Beth Mikra* 15 (1970): 375-80.
- Argal, R. A. *1 Enoch and Sirach: A Comparative Literary and Conceptual Analysis of the Themes of Revelation, Creation and Judgment*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994.
- Arterbury, Andrew. *Entertaining Angels: Early Christian Hospitality in Its Mediterranean Setting*. New Testament Monographs 8. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005.
- Asensio, Victor Morla. "Poverty and Wealth: Ben Sira's View of Possessions." Pages 150-78 in *Der Einzelne und seine Gemeinschaft bei Ben Sira*. Edited by Renate Egger-Wenzel and Ingrid Krammer. BZAW 270. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1998.
- The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. 1885-1887. 10 vols. Reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
- The Apostolic Fathers*. Translated by Kirsopp Lake. 2 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1912.
- Asgeirsson, Jon Ma., April D. Deconick, and Risto Uro, eds., *Thomasine Traditions in Antiquity: The Social and Cultural World of the Gospel of Thomas*. Nag Hammadi & Manichaean Studies 59. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2006.
- Assman, Jan. *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*. Translated by David Lorton. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005.
- . "A Dialogue Between Self and Soul: Papyrus Berlin 3024." In *Self, Soul and Body in Religious Experience*. Edited by A.I. Baumgarten et al. SHR 78. Leiden: Brill, 1998.
- Augustine, *De Trinitate*. Translated by Gareth B. Matthews. Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Baarda, T. "Luke 12, 13-14: Text and Transmission from Marcion to Augustine." Pages 1117-72 in *Early Transmission of Words of Jesus: Thomas, Tatian, and the Text*

- of the New Testament. Edited by T. Baarda. Amsterdam: Boekhandel/Utgeverij, 1983. Originally published in *Christianity, Judaism, and other Graeco-Roman Cults*. Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty. Vol. 1. Leiden: Brill, 1975.
- . “The Sentences of the Syriac Menander.” In Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*, 2.583-606.
- Baasland, Ernst. “Zum Beispiel der Beispielerzählungen: Zur Formenlehre der Gleichnisse und zur Methodik der Gleichnisauslegung.” *NovT* 28 (1986): 193-219.
- Bacon, B. W. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. New York: MacMillan & Co., 1900.
- Bailey, Kenneth E. *Poet and Peasant: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1976.
- . *Through Peasant Eyes: More Lucan Parables, Their Culture and Style*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980.
- Barclay, J. M. G. *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora, from Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE—117 CE)*. Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1996.
- Bauer, Walter, Frederick Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Revised and edited by Frederick Danker. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000.
- Beardslee, William A. *Literary Criticism of the New Testament*. Philadelphia, 1970.
- . “The Wisdom Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels.” *JAAR* 35 (1967): 231-40.
- Beavis, Mary Ann. “The Foolish Landowner (Luke 12:16b-20).” Pages 55-68 in *Jesus and his Parables: Interpreting the Parables of Jesus Today*. Edited by V. George Shillington. Edinburgh: T & Clark, 1997.
- Beentjes, Pancratius C., ed. *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew: A Text Edition of All Extant Manuscripts and a Synopsis of All Parallel Hebrew Ben Sira Texts* (VTSupp 68; Leiden: Brill, 1997).
- . “God’s Mercy: ‘Racham’(pi.), ‘Rachum’, and ‘Rachamim’ in the Book of Ben Sira.” Pages 231-48 in *‘Happy the One who Meditates on Wisdom’ (Sir 14.20): Collected Essays on the Book of Ben Sira*. Edited by Pancratius C. Beentjes. *Biblical Exegesis and Theology* 43. Leuven: Peeters, 2006.
- . *“Happy the One who Meditates on Wisdom” (Sir. 14,20): Collected Essays on the Book of Ben Sira*. *Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology* 43. Leuven: Peeters, 2006.
- Betz, Hans Diter *Lukian von Samosata und das Neue Testament: Religionsgeschichtliche und paränetische Parallelen*. Ein Beitrag zum Corpus Hellenisticum Novi Testamenti. TUGAL 76. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1961.
- Bickermann, Elias. *Four Strange Books of the Bible* (New York: Schocken, 1967).
- Blenkinsopp, Joseph. *Wisdom and Law in the Old Testament: The Ordering of Life in Israel and Early Judaism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

- Blount, Brian. *Cultural Interpretation: Reorienting New Testament Criticism*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.
- Bonner, Campbell, ed., *The Last Chapters of Enoch in Greek*. London: Christophers, 1937. Reprint, Stuttgart: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968.
- Borgman, Paul. *The Way According to Luke: Hearing the Whole Story of Luke-Acts*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006.
- Bornkamm, Günther. *Jesus of Nazareth*. Translated by Irene and Fraser McLuskey with James M. Robinson. New York: Harper and Row, 1960.
- Boucher, Madeleine I. *The Parables*. Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1981.
- Bovon, François. *L'Évangile Selon Saint Luc 9,51-14,35*. Commentaire du Nouveau Testament Deuxième Série IIIb. Geneve: Labor et fides, 1996.
- . "The Reception and Use of the Gospel of Luke in the Second Century." Pages 379-400 in *Reading Luke: Interpretation, Reflection, Formation*. Edited by Craig G. Bartholomew et al. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005.
- Box, G. H. *The Testament of Abraham: Translated from the Greek Text with Introduction and Notes*. London: SPCK, 1927.
- Braun, R. *Kohelet und die frühhellenistische Populärphilosophie*. BZAW 130. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1973.
- Bremer, Jan Maarten. "Death and Immortality in Some Greek Poems." Pages 109-24 in *Hidden Futures: Death and Immortality in Ancient Egypt, Anatolia, the Classical, Biblical and Arabic-Islamic World*. Edited by Jan Maarten Bremer, Theo P.J. van den Hout, et al. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1994.
- . "The Soul, Death, and the Afterlife in Early and Classical Greece." Pages 91-106 in *Hidden Futures: Death and Immortality in Ancient Egypt, Anatolia, the Classical, Biblical and Arabic-Islamic World*. Edited by Jan Maarten Bremer, Theo P.J. van den Hout, et al. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1994.
- Brown, F., S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, with an appendix, containing the Biblical Aramaic*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996.
- Brown, William P. *Character in Crisis: A Fresh Approach to the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.
- . *Ecclesiastes*. Interpretation. Louisville: John Knox Press, 2000.
- Bruce, Alexander Balmain. *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ. A Systematic and Critical Study of the Parables of our Lord*. 3rd rev. ed. New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1898.
- Brueggemann, Walter A. "The Epistemological Crisis of Israel's Two Histories (Jer 9:22-23)." Pages 85-105 in *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien*. Edited by John G. Gammie et al. New York: Union Theological Seminary, 1978.

- . “Psalms and the Life of Faith: A Suggested Typology of Function.” *JSOT* 17 (1980): 3-32.
- Bultmann, Rudolf. *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*. Translated by John Marsh. Oxford: Blackwell, 1963.
- . *Theology of the New Testament*. Translated by Kendrick Grobel. New York: Charles Scriber’s Sons, 1951 and 1955.
- Burkes, Shannon. *Death in Qoheleth and Egyptian Biographies of the Late Period*. SBLDS 170. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999.
- . *Theology, God, Self, and Death: The Shape of Religious Transformation in the Second Temple Period*. Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 79. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003.
- Byargeon, Ricky William “The Significance of the Enjoy Life Concept in Qoheleth’s Challenge of the Wisdom Tradition.” Ph.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1991.
- Cadbury, Henry J. *The Making of Luke-Acts*. London: S.P.C.K., 1956.
- Cadoux, Arthur T. *The Parables of Jesus: Their Art and Use*. London: James Clark, 1931.
- Caird, George Bradford. *The Gospel of St. Luke*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1963.
- . *New Testament Theology*. Edited by L. D. Hurst. Oxford: Clarendon, 1994.
- Calduch-Benages, Nuria, Joan Ferrer, and Jan Liesen. *La sabiduría del escriba: Edición diplomática de la versión siríaca del libro de Ben Sira según el Códice ambrosiano, con traducción española e inglesa*. Biblioteca Midrásica 26. Estella, Navarra: Editorial Verbo Divino, 2003.
- Calvin, Jean. *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*. Vol. 2. Translated by William Pringle. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949.
- Caquot, André. “Israelite Perceptions of Wisdom and Strength in the Light of the Ras Shamra Texts” Pages 25-33 in *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien*. Edited by John G. Gammie et al.; New York: Union Theological Seminary, 1978.
- Carter, Warren. *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations*. Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2001.
- Cassian, John. *Institutes*. Translated by Boniface Ramsey. Paulist Press, 2000.
- Champlin, Edward. *Final Judgments: Duty and Emotion in Romans Wills, 200 B.C.—A.D. 250*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
- Charlesworth, James. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Vol. 1-2. New York: Doubleday, 1985.
- Chen, Diane G. *God as Father in Luke-Acts*. SBL 92. New York: Peter Lang, 2006.

- Chopinaneu, J. "Hèvèl en hébreu biblique: Contribution à l'étude des rapports entre sémantique et exégèse de l'Ancien Testament." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Strasbourg, 1971.
- Christianson, Eric S. *A Time to Tell*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.
- Chrysostom, John. *On Wealth and Poverty*. Translated by Catharine P. Roth. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1984.
- Clement of Alexandria. *Stromata Buch I-VI*. Edited by O. Stählin and Ludwig Früchtel. 3rd ed. Vol. 2 of *Clemens Alexandrinus*. Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichsche Buchlandlung, 1960.
- Clements, Ronald E. *Wisdom in Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992.
- Clines, David J. A., ed. *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Vol. 3. א-ט. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.
- Coffey, Michael. *Roman Satire*. London: Methuen and Co, 1976.
- Collins, John J. *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.
- . *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age*. OTL. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997.
- . "Wisdom, Apocalypticism, and Generic Compatibility." Pages 165-85 in *Conflicted Boundaries in Wisdom and Apocalypticism*. Edited by Benjamin G. Wright III and Lawrence M. Wills. SBLSS 35. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005.
- Conzelmann, Hans. *Die Mitte Der Zeit*. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1953.
- Corley, Jeremy. *Ben Sira's Teaching on Friendship*. Brown Judaic Studies 316. Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2002.
- . "God as Merciful Father in Ben Sira and the New Testament." Pages 33-38 in *Ben Sira's God: Proceedings of the International Ben Sira Conference Durham – Ushaw College 2001*. Edited by Renate Egger-Wenzel. BZAW 321. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002.
- Coughenour, Robert A. "Enoch and Wisdom: A Study of the Wisdom Elements in the Book of Enoch." Ph.D. dissertation, Case Western Reserve, 1972.
- . "The Woe Oracles in Ethiopic Enoch." *JSJ* 9 (1978): 192-97.
- Craddock, Fred B. *Luke*. Interpretation Series. Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990.
- Crenshaw, James L. "The Concept of God in Old Testament Wisdom." Pages 1-18 in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie*. Edited by Leo G. Perdue, Bernard Brandon Scott, and William Johnston Wiseman.
- . *Ecclesiastes*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1987.
- . "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence Upon 'Historical' Literature." *JBL* 88 (1969): 129-42.

- . *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*. Revised ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1981.
- . “The Shadow of Death in Qoheleth.” Pages 205-16 in *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien*. Edited by John G. Gammie. New York: Scholars Press, 1978.
- Cross, F. M. “The Oldest Manuscripts from Qumran.” *JBL* 74 (1955): 147-72.
- Crossan, John Dominic. *The Dark Interval: Towards a Theology of Story*. Niles, Ill.: Argus Communications, 1975.
- . *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus*. New York: Harper & Row, 1973.
- . “Parable and Example in the Teaching of Jesus.” *NTS* 18 (1971-72): 285-307.
- Cyril of Alexandria. *The Gospel of Saint Luke*. Translated by R. Payne Smith. Long Island, NY: Studion Publishers, 1983.
- D’Alario, Vittoria. “La réflexion sur le sens de la vie en Sg 1-6: Une réponse aux questions de HJob et de Qohélet,” Pages 313-29 in *Treasures of Wisdom: Studies in Ben Sira and the Book of Wisdom (Festschrift M. Gilbert)*. Edited by N. Calduch-Benages and J. Vermeulen. Leuven: Leuven University, 1999.
- Danker, Frederick W. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- . *Jesus and the New Age: A Commentary on St. Luke’s Gospel*. Rev. ed. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988.
- Darr, John A. *On Character Building: The Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in Luke-Acts*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992.
- Degenhardt, H. J. *Lukas Evangelist der Armen*. Stuttgart: Katholische Bibelwerk, 1965.
- Delcor, Mathias. “Jewish Literature in Hebrew and Aramaic in the Greek Era.” In *The Cambridge History of Judaism*. Vol. 1. Edited by W. D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- . *Le Testament d’Abraham*. SVTP 2. Leiden: Brill, 1973.
- Dell, Katherine. *‘Get Wisdom, Get Insight’: An Introduction to Israel’s Wisdom Literature*. Macon, GA: Smith & Helwys, 2000.
- Delling, Gerhard. “πλεονέκτης, πλεονεκτέω, πλεονεχία.” Pages 266-74 in vol. 6 of *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969.
- Derchain, Philippe. “Death in Egyptian Religion.” Pages 111-15 in *Mythologies*. Vol. 1. Edited by Yves Bonnefoy. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- Derrett, J. D. “The Rich Fool: A Parable of Jesus Concerning Inheritance.” *Heythrop Journal* 18 (1977): 131-51.

- Dibelius, Martin. *From Tradition to Gospel*. Translated by Bertram Lee Woolf. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935.
- Dieleman, J. *Priests, Tongues, and Rites: The London-Leiden Magical Manuscripts and Translation in Egyptian Ritual (100-300 CE)*. Leiden: Brill, 2005.
- Dodd, Charles Harold. *The Parables of the Kingdom*. Revised ed. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961.
- Donahue, John R. *The Gospel in Parable: Metaphor, Narrative and Theology in the Synoptic Gospels*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988.
- Donaldson, T. L. "Parallels: Use, Misuse, and Limitations." *EvQ* 55 (1983): 193-210.
- Dupont, Jacques. *Les béatitudes 3: Les évangélistes*. Paris: Gabalda, 1973.
- Eichholz, Georg. *Gleichnisse der Evangelien: Form Überlieferung Auslegung*. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1971.
- Elliger, K. and W. Rudolph, eds. *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. 5th ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997.
- Erasmus. *Collected Works of Erasmus: Paraphrase on Luke 11-24*. Translated by Jane E. Phillips. New Testament Scholarship. Edited by Robert D. Sider. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003.
- Esler, Philip Frances. *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Evans, Christopher F. *Saint Luke*. TPI New Testament Commentaries. Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990.
- Feldman, E. *Biblical and Post-Biblical Defilement and Mourning: Law as Theology*. New York: Yeshiva University Press and Ktav Pub. House, 1977.
- Fichtner, J. "Jesaja unter den Weisen." *TLZ* 74 (1949): 75-80.
- Fitzgerald, John T. "Last Wills and Testaments in Graeco-Roman Perspective." Pages 637-72 in *Early Christianity and Classical Culture: Comparative Studies in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*. Edited by John T. Fitzgerald, et al. Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2003.
- Fitzmyer, J. A. *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*. Anchor Bible 28A. Garden City: Doubleday, 1985.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge, 1972.
- Fowden, Garth. *Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Fox, Michael V. *A Time to Tear Down and a Time to Build Up: A Rereading Ecclesiastes*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- . "Aging and Death in Qoheleth 12." *JSOT* 42 (1988): 55-77.
- . *Ecclesiastes: The JPS Bible Commentary*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004.

- . “The Meaning of HEBEL for Qohelet.” *JBL* 105 (1986): 409-27.
- . *Qohelet and His Contradictions*. Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1989.
- Frankemölle, H. “Zum Thema des Jakobusbriefes im Kontext der Rezeption von Sir 2, 1-18 und 15, 11-20.” *Biblische Notizen* 48 (1989): 21-49.
- Frankl, Victor. *Man’s Search for Meaning*. New York: Washington Square Press, 1985.
- Friberg, Barbara and Timothy. *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004.
- Funk, Robert W. *Parables and Presence: Forms of the New Testament Tradition*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982.
- Galling, K. *Die Krise der Aufklärung in Israel*. Mainzer Universitätsreden 19. Mainz: Verlag der Johannes Gutenberg- Buchhandlung, 1952.
- Gammie, John G. “From Prudentialism to Apocalypticism: The Houses of the Sages Amid the Varying Forms of Wisdom.” Pages 479-97 in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. Edited by John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
- . “The Sage in Sirach.” Pages 355-72 in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. Edited by John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
- Gardiner, Alan H. *The Attitude of the Ancient Egyptians to Death and the Dead*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935.
- Garland, Robert. *The Greek Way of Death*. London: Duckworth, 1985.
- Geertz, Clifford. “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight.” Pages 412-53 in *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Edited by Clifford Geertz. New York: Basic Books, 1973.
- Gerhardsson, Birger. “If We Do not Cut the Parables Out of Their Frames.” *NTS* 37/3 (1991): 321-35.
- Gianto, Agustinos. “The Theme of Enjoyment in Qohelet.” *Biblica* 73 (1992): 528-532.
- Gilbert, Maurice. “La description de la vieillesse en Qohelet XII 1-7 est-elle allégorique?” *VTSup* 32 (1981): 96-109.
- . *Les cinq livres des Sages: Les Proverbes de Salomon, Le livre de Job, Qohélet ou l’Écclésiaste, Le livre de ben Sira, La Sagesse de Salomon*. Paris: Cerf, 2003.
- Ginsburg, Christian D. *Coheloth*. London: Longman, Green and Roberts, 1861. Reprint, New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1970.
- Gordis, Robbert. *Koheloth—the Man and his World. A Study of Ecclesiastes*. 3rd ed. New York: Schocken Books, 1955.
- . “Quotations in Biblical, Oriental and Rabbinic Literature.” *HUCA* 22 (1949): 157-219.

- . “Quotations in Wisdom Literature.” *JQR* 30 (1939/40): 123-47. Reprint, pages 220-44 in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*. Edited by James L. Crenshaw. New York: KTAV, 1976.
- Gould, E. P. *St. Mark*. ICC; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1896.
- Green, Joel. *The Gospel of Luke*. NICNT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.
- Green, Joel B. and Michael C. McKeever, eds. *Luke-Acts and New Testament Historiography*. IBR Bibliographies. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994.
- Gregory. *Gregory the Great: Forty Gospel Homilies*. Translated by David Hurst. Kalamazoo, Mich: Cistercian Publications, 1990.
- Gregory of Nyssa. *Homélies sur l’Ecclésiaste*. Translated by P. Alexander. Sources Chrétiennes 46. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1996.
- Gregory Thaumaturgos. *Gregory Thaumaturgos’ Paraphrase of Ecclesiastes*. Translated by John Jarick. SCSS 29. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1990.
- Gregory, Andrew. “Looking for Luke in the Second Century: A Dialogue with François Bovon.” Pages 401-15 in *Reading Luke: Interpretation, Reflection, Formation*. Edited by Craig G. Bartholomew et al. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005.
- . “The Reception of Luke and Acts and the Unity of Luke-Acts.” *JSNT* 29 (2007): 459-72.
- . *The Reception of Luke and Acts in the Period before Irenaeus*. WUNT 2.169. Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2003.
- Gressmann, Hugo. *Vom reichen Mann und armen Lazarus: Eine literargeschichtliche Studie*. Abhandlungen der königlich preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften: Philosophisch-historische Klasse 1918. No. 7. Berlin: Verlag der königlich Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1918.
- Grobel, Kendrick. “. . . Whose Name Was Neves.” *NTS* 10 (1963-64): 373-82.
- Gryson, Roger, ed. *Biblia Sacra: Iuxta Vulgata Versionem*. 4th ed. Stuttgart: Detsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994.
- Guelich, Robert A. *The Sermon on the Mount*. Waco: Word, 1982.
- Harrington, Daniel J. *Jesus Ben Sira of Jerusalem: A Biblical Guide to Living Wisely*. Collegeville: Liturgical, 2005.
- Hartin, Patrick J. “‘Who is Wise and Understanding Among You?’ (James 3:13): An Analysis of Wisdom, Eschatology, and Apocaypticism in the Letter of James.” Pages 149-68 in *Conflicted Boundaries in Wisdom and Apocalypticism*. Edited by Benjamin G. Wright III and Lawrence M. Wills. SBLSS 35. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005.
- Hays, Richard B. *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel’s Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.
- . *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989.

- . *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1996.
- Hays, Richard B. and Joel B. Green, “The Use of the Old Testament by New Testament Writers.” Pages 222-238 in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*. Edited by Joel B. Green. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Hedrick, Charles. *Parables as Poetic Fictions: The Creative Voice of Jesus*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
- Heininger, Bernhard. *Metaphorik, Erzählstruktur und szenisch-dramatische Gestaltung in den Sondergutgleichnissen bei Lukas*. Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen 24. Münster: aschendorff, 1991.
- Helck, W. “Maat.” Pages 1110-19 in *Lexicon der Ägyptologie*. Vol. 3. Edited by W. Helck et al. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1980.
- Hendrickx, Herman. *The Parables of Jesus*. Rev. ed. Studies in the Synoptic Gospels. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986.
- Hengel, Martin. *Judaism and Hellenism*. Translated by John Bowden. 2 vols. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974.
- Herzog, William R. *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994.
- Hock, Ronald F. “The Parable of the Foolish Rich Man (Luke 12:16-20) and Graeco-Roman Conventions of Thought and Behavior.” Pages 181-96 in *Early Christianity and Classical Culture: Comparative Studies in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*. Edited by John T. Fitzgerald, et al. Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2003.
- Holladay, William L., ed. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Leiden: Brill, 1988.
- Hollander, John. *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.
- Hoppe, R. *Der theologische Hintergrund des Jakobusbriefes*. Forschung zur Bibel 28; Würzburg: Echter-Verlag, 1977.
- Horsley, Richard A. “The Politics of Cultural Production in Second Temple Judea: Historical Context and Political-Religious Relations of the Scribes who Produced *1 Enoch*, *Sirach*, and *Daniel*.” Pages 123-45 in *Conflicted Boundaries in Wisdom and Apocalypticism*. Edited by Benjamin G. Wright III and Lawrence M. Wills. SBLSS 35. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005.
- Horst, P. W. van der “Pseudo-Phocylides Revisited,” *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 3 (1988): 3-30. Reprint, idem, *Essays on the Jewish World of Early Christianity* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), 35-62.
- Hultgren, Arland J. *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.
- Hunter, Alastair. *Wisdom Literature*. London: SCM Press, 2006.
- Iser, Wolfgang. *The Act of Reading*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.

- James, Montague Rhodes. *The Testament of Abraham: The Greek Text Now First Edited with an Introduction and Notes*. TS 2/2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1892.
- Jastrow, Marcus. *Dictionary of the Targumim, the Tamud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005.
- Jeremias, Joachim. *The Parables of Jesus*. Translated by S. H. Hooke. 2nd rev. ed. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1972.
- Johnson, Luke Timothy. *The Gospel of Luke*. Sacra Pagina 3. Edited by Daniel J. Harrington. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991.
- . *The Letter of James: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. AB 37A. New York: Doubleday, 1995.
- . “Literary Criticism of Luke-Acts: Is Reception History Pertinent?” *JSNT* 28 (2005): 159-62.
- . *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts*. Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1977.
- . “The Lukan Kingship Parable.” *NovT* 24 (1982): 139-59.
- . *Sharing Possessions: Mandate and Symbol of Faith*. Overtures to Biblical Theology. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981.
- Johnston, Sarah Iles. *Restless Dead: Encounters between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
- Jones, Gerant Vaughan. *The Art and Truth of the Parables: A Study in Their Literary Form and Modern Interpretation*. London: SPCK, 1964.
- Jülicher, Adolf. *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*. 2 vols. Freiburg i. B.: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1888 (first volume), 1889 (first and second volume). Reprint in one vol. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1910.
- Karris, Robert J. “Poor and Rich: The Lukan Sitz im Leben.” Pages 112-25 in *Perspectives on Luke-Acts*. Edited by Charles H. Talbert. Danville, VA: Association of Baptist Professors of Religion, 1978.
- Kasher, A. *The Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985.
- Kim, Kyoung-Jin. *Stewardship and Almsgiving in Luke’s Theology*. JSNTSup. Vol. 155. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.
- King, Martin Luther. “The Man Who Was a Fool.” Pages 69-76 in *Strength to Love*. Edited by Martin Luther King, Jr. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981.
- Kissinger, Warren S. *The Parables of Jesus: A History of Interpretation and Bibliography*. ATLA Bibliography Series. Vol. 4. Metuchen, NJ: American Theological Library Association, 1979.
- Kister, M. “Some Observations on Vocabulary and Style in the DSS.” Pages 137-65 in *Diggers at the Well: Proceedings of a Third International Symposium on the*

- Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls & Ben Sira*. Edited by T. Muraoka and J. F. Elwolde. Leiden: Brill, 2000.
- Kloppenborg, John S. *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987.
- Klostermann, Erich and Hugo Gressmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*. HNT 2.1. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1919.
- Koch, Klaus. "Gibt es ein Vergeltungsdogma im Alten Testament?" Pages 130-80 in *Um das Prinzip der Vergeltung in Religion und Recht des Alten Testaments*. Edited by K. Koch. Wege der Forschung 125. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972.
- Koch, R. "Die Wertung des Besitzes im Lukasevangelium." *Biblica* 38 (1957): 151-169.
- Koehler, Ludwig and Walter Baumgartner, eds., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Vol 1: א-ת. Leiden: Brill, 1994.
- Koester, Helmut. "Gnomai Diaphorai: The Origin and Nature of Diversification in the History of Early Christianity." Pages 114-57 in *Trajectories through Early Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971.
- Kolarcik, M. *The Ambiguity of Death in the Book of Wisdom 1-6*. AnBib 127. Rome: Istituto Biblico, 1991.
- Kolenkow, Anitra Bingham. "The Genre Testament and the Testament of Abraham." Pages 139-52 in Nickelsburg, *Studies on the Testament of Abraham*. Edited by George W. E. Nickelsburg. SBL Septuagint and Cognate Studies. Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1972.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Semiotiké: Recherches pour une sémanalyse*. Collections Tel Quel; Paris: Le Seuil, 1969.
- Kugel, James L. "Qohelet and Money." *CBQ* 51 (1989): 32-49.
- Kümmel, Werner Georg. *The Theology of the New Testament: According to its Major Witnesses: Jesus, Paul, John*. Translated by John E. Steely. Nashville: Abingdon, 1973.
- Kurtz Donna C. and John Broadman, *Greek Burial Customs*. Aspects of Greek and Roman Life. London: Thames & Hudson, 1971.
- Lagarde, Paul de. *Libri Veteris Testamenti Apocryphi Syriace*. London: Williams & Norgate, 1861.
- Lambdin, Thomas O. *Introduction to Sahidic Coptic*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2000.
- Landes, George M. "Jonah: A MĀŠĀL?" Pages 137-58 in *Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien*. Edited by John G. Gammie, Walter A. Brueggemann, et al. New York: Union Theological Seminary, 1978.
- Lattimore, Richmond. *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs*. Illinois Studies in Language and Literature 28. Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1942.

- Lavoie, Jean-Jacques. *La pensée du Qohélet: Étude exégétique et intertextuelle*. Quebec: Fides, 1992.
- Lee, Eunny P. *The Vitality of Enjoyment in Qohelet's Theological Rhetoric*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005.
- Lehtipuu, Outi. *The Afterlife Imagery in Luke's Story of the Rich Man and Lazarus*. Supplements to Novum Testamentum 123. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2007.
- . "Characterization and Persuasion: The Rich Man and the Poor Man in Luke 16.19-31." Pages 73-105 in *Characterization in the Gospels: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism*. JSNTSS 184. Edited by David M. Rhoads and Kari Syreeni. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.
- Levi, Israel. *The Hebrew Text of the Book of Ecclesiasticus*. Semitic Studies Series. Leiden: Brill, 1904.
- Lexa, Francois, ed. *Papyrus Insinger*. Vol. II. Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geunther, 1926.
- Lichtheim, Miriam. *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*. 3 vols. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973–80.
- . *Late Egyptian Wisdom Literature in the International Context: A Study of Demotic Instructions*. OBO 52. Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983.
- . *Maat in Egyptian Autobiographies and Related Studies*. OBO 120. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992.
- Liddell, Henry George and Robert Scott. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th ed. Revised by Henry Stuart Jones. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.
- Lindblom, J. "Wisdom in the Old Testament Prophets." Pages 192-204 in *Wisdom in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. VTSup 3. H. H. Rowley Festschrift. Edited by M. Noth and D. W. Thomas. Leiden: Brill, 1955.
- Linnemann, Eta. *Parables of Jesus: Introduction and Exposition*. London: SPCK, 1975.
- Lips, H. von. *Weisheitliche Traditionen im Neuen Testament*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 64. München: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990.
- Litwak, Kenneth Duncan. *Echoes of Scripture in Luke-Acts: Telling the History of God's People Intertextually*. JSNTSS 282. London / New York: T& T Clark International, 2005.
- Lohfink, Norbert. "Qoheleth 5:17-19 – Revelation by Joy." *CBQ* 52 (1990): 625-635.
- . *Qoheleth: A Continental Commentary*. Translated by Sean McEvenue. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003.
- Longman III, Tremper. *The Book of Ecclesiastes*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- Loretz, O. *Qohelet und der alte Orient*. Freiburg: Herder, 1964.

- Louw, J.P. and Eugene A. Nida. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. 2 vols. American Bible Society, 1999.
- Lucian of Samasota. *Adversus indoctum*. Translated by A. M. Harmon. Vol. 3. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1921.
- . *Bis accusatus*. Translated by A. M. Harmon. Vol. 3. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1921.
- . *Cataplus*. Translated by A. M. Harmon. Vol. 2. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1915.
- . *Charon*. Translated by A. M. Harmon. Vol. 2. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1915.
- . *De luctu*. Translated by A. M. Harmon. Vol. 4. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1925.
- . *De morte Peregrini*. Translated by A. M. Harmon. Vol. 5. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1936.
- . *De parasito*. Translated by A. M. Harmon. Vol. 3. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1921.
- . *De sacrificiis*. Translated by A. M. Harmon. Vol. 3. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1921.
- . *Demonax*. Translated by A. M. Harmon. Vol. 1. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1913.
- . *Dialogi mortuorum*. Translated by M. D. MacLeod. Vol. 7. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1961.
- . *Gallus*. Translated by A. M. Harmon. Vol. 2. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1915.
- . *Icaromenippus*. Translated by A. M. Harmon. Vol. 2. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1915.
- . *Juppiter confutatus*. Translated by A. M. Harmon. Vol. 2. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1915.
- . *Juppiter tragoedus*. Translated by A. M. Harmon. Vol. 2. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1915.
- . *Menippus*. Translated by A. M. Harmon. Vol. 4. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1925.
- . *Nigrinus*. Translated by A. M. Harmon. Vol. 1. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1913.
- . *Phalaris*. Translated by A. M. Harmon. Vol. 1. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1913.
- . *Philopseudes*. Translated by A. M. Harmon. Vol. 3. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1921.

- . *Piscator*. Translated by A. M. Harmon. Vol. 3. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1921.
- . *Saturnalia*. Translated by K. Kilburn. Vol. 6. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1959.
- . *Symposium*. Translated by A. M. Harmon. Vol. 1. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1913.
- . *Timon*. Translated by A. M. Harmon. Vol. 2. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1915.
- . *Toxaris*. Translated by A. M. Harmon. Vol. 5. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1936.
- . *Vitarum auctio*. Translated by A. M. Harmon. Vol. 2. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1915.
- Ludlow, Jared Warner. *Abraham Meets Death: Narrative Humor in the Testament of Abraham*. JSPSup 41. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002.
- Lust, J. and Erik Eynikel. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*. Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979.
- Luther, Martin. *1 Timothy*. Vol. 28 in *Luther's Works: Commentaries on 1 Corinthians 7, 1 Corinthians 15, Lectures on 1 Timothy*. Edited by Hilton C. Oswald. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1973.
- . *Fourteen Consolations*. Translated by Martin H. Bertram. Vol. 42 in *Luther's Works: Devotional Writings*. Edited by Martin O. Dietrich. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969.
- . *Sermons of Martin Luther: The House Postils*. Translated and edited by Eugene F. A. Klug et al. Vols. 1-3. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996.
- . *The Sermon on the Mount*. Translated by Jaroslav Pelikan. Vol. 21 in *Luther's Works: The Sermon on the Mount and the Magnificat*. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan. Saint Louis: Concordia, 1956.
- . *Trade and Usury*. Translated by Charles M. Jacobs. Vol. 45 in *Luther's Works: The Christian and Society*. Edited by Walther I. Brandt. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962.
- Mack, Burton L. *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988.
- MacLeod, M. D., trans. *Lucian*. Vol. 8. LCL. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967.
- MacRae, G. "Gnosticism and the Church of John's Gospel." Pages 84-96 in *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity*. Edited by C. W. Hedrick and R. Hodgson. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1986.
- Malherbe, Abraham. "The Christianization of a *Topos* (Luke 12:13-34)." *NovT* 38 (1996): 123-35.

- , ed. *The Cynic Epistles: A Study Edition*. SBL SBS 12. Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977.
- . “Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament.” Pages 267-333 in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II.26.I. Edited by Wolfgang Haase. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1992.
- Marböck, Johann. *Weisheit im Wandel: Untersuchungen zur Weisheitstheologie bei Ben Sira*. Bonner biblische Beiträge 37. Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1971.
- Marshall, I. Howard. *Luke: Historian and Theologian*. Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1970.
- May, John R. “Visual Story and the Religious Interpretation of Film.” In *Religion in Film*. Edited by John R. May and Michael Bird. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982.
- McCall, Marsh H. *Ancient Rhetorical Theories of Simile and Comparison*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969.
- McKane, W. *Prophets and Wise Men*. SBT 44. London: SCM, 1965.
- Metzger, Bruce M. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament*. 4th rev. ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/United Bible Societies, 1994.
- Metzger, James A. *Consumption and Wealth in Luke's Travel Narrative*. Biblical Interpretation Series 88. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- Meyer, Elizabeth A. “Explaining the Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire: The Evidence of Epitaphs.” *JRS* 80 (1990): 74-96.
- Midendorp, Th. *Die Stellung Jesu Ben Siras zwischen Judentum und Hellenismus*. Leiden: Brill, 1973.
- Milde, Henk. “‘Going out into the Day’: Ancient Egyptian Beliefs and Practices concerning Death.” Pages 15-34 in *Hidden Futures: Death and Immortality in Ancient Egypt, Anatolia, the Classical, Biblical and Arabic-Islamic World*. Edited by Jan Maarten Bremer, Theo P.J. van den Hout, et al. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1994.
- Montefiore, Hugh. “A Comparison of the Parables of the Gospel According to Thomas and of the Synoptic Gospels.” Pages 40-78 in *Thomas and the Evangelists*. Edited by Hugh Montefiore and H.E.W. Turner. SBT. Vol. 1. London: SCM Press, 1962.
- Morenz, Siegfried. *Egyptian Religion*. Ithaca: Cornell, 1973.
- Mosely, A. “Jesus' Audiences in the Gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke.” *NTS* 10 (1963): 139-49.
- Moxnes, Halvor. *The Economy of the Kingdom: Social Conflict and Economic Relations in Luke's Gospel*. Overtures to Biblical Theology. Vol. 23. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988.
- . “Patron-Client Relations and the New Community.” Pages 241-69 in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*. Edited by Jerome H. Neyrey. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991.

- Motto, Anna Lydia. *Seneca Sourcebook: Guide to the Thought of Lucius Annaeus Seneca. In the extant prose works—Epistulae Morales, the Dialogi, De Beneficiis, De Clementia, and Quaestiones Naturale*. Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1970
- Muilenberg, James. "A Qoheleth Scroll from Qumran." *BASOR* 135 (1954): 20-28.
- Murphy, Roland E. "The Sage in Ecclesiastes and Qoheleth the Sage." In *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. Edited by John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
- . *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*. Anchor Bible Reference Library. New York: Doubleday, 1990.
- . "Wisdom—Theses and Hypotheses." Pages 35-42 in *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien*. Edited by John G. Gammie et al. New York: Union Theological Seminary, 1978.
- Murphy, Roland E. and Elizabeth Huwiler. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*. NIBC. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999.
- Nelson, Milward Douglas. *The Syriac Version of the Wisdom of Ben Sira Compared to the Greek and Hebrew Materials*. SBLDS 107. Atlanta: Scholars, 1988.
- Neusner, Jacob, ed. *Judaism, Christianity and other Graeco-Roman Cults*. Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty. 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1975.
- Newsom, Carol. A. "The Development of 1 Enoch 6-19: Cosmology and Judgment." *CBQ* 42 (1980): 310-29.
- Nickelsburg, George W. E. *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1-36; 81-108*. Hermeneia. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001.
- . "Eschatology in the Testament of Abraham: A Study of the Judgment Scene in the Two Recensions." Pages 23-64 in *Studies on the Testament of Abraham*. Edited by George W. E. Nickelsburg. SBL Septuagint and Cognate Studies. Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1972.
- . "Revisiting the Rich and the Poor in 1 Enoch 92-105 and the Gospel According to Luke." Pages 579-605 in *SBL Seminar Papers, 1998*.
- . "Riches, the Rich and God's Judgment in 1 Enoch 92-105 and the Gospel according to Luke." *NTS* 25 (1978-1979): 324-344.
- . "Social Aspects of Palestinian Jewish Apocalypticism," Pages 641-54 in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East*. Edited by D. Hellholm. 2nd ed. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989.
- . "Structure and Message in the Testament of Abraham." Pages 85-93 in *Studies on the Testament of Abraham*. Edited by George W. E. Nickelsburg. SBL Septuagint and Cognate Studies. Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1972.
- . "Summary and Prospects for Future Work." Pages 289-98 in *Studies on the Testament of Abraham*. Edited by George W. E. Nickelsburg. SBL Septuagint and Cognate Studies; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1972.

- Nickelsburg, George W. E. and James C. VanderKam, trans. *1 Enoch: A New Translation*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004.
- Noël, Filip. *The Travel Narrative in the Gospel of Luke: Interpretation of Lk 9,51 – 19,28*. Collectanea Biblica et Religiosa Antiqua 5. Brussels: Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België voor Wetenschappen en Kunsten, 2004.
- Nolland, John. "The Role of Money and Possessions in the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32): A Test Case." Pages 178-209 in *Reading Luke: Interpretation, Reflection, Formation*. Edited by Craig G. Bartholomew, Joel B. Green, Anthony C. Thiselton. Scripture and Hermeneutics Series. Vol. 6. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.
- Nussbaum, Martha C. *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- O'Day, Gail R. "The Citation of Scripture as a Key to Characterization in Acts." In *Scripture and Traditions: Essays on Early Judaism and Christianity in Honor of Carl R. Holladay*. Edited by Patrick Gray and Gail R. O'Day. Supplements to Novum Testamentum. Leiden: Brill, 2008.
- . "Jeremiah 9:22-23 and 1 Corinthians 1:26-31: A Study in Intertextuality." *JBL* 109/2 (1990): 259-67.
- Ogden, Graham. "Qoheleth's Use of the 'Nothing is Better'-Form." *JBL* 98 (1979): 339-50.
- Pao, David W. *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 2000.
- Parsons, Mikael. "The Unity of Lukan Writings: Rethinking the *Opinio Communis*." Pages 29-53 in *Steadfast Purpose: Essays on Acts in Honor of Hendry Jackson Flanders*. Edited by N. H. Keathley. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 1990.
- Patterson, Stephen J. *The Gospel of Thomas within the Development of Early Christianity*. Ph.D. dissertation, Claremont Graduate University, 1988.
- Patterson, Stephen J. and James M. Robinson, eds. *The Fifth Gospel: The Gospel of Thomas Comes of Age*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998.
- Perkins, Pheme. *Hearing the Parables of Jesus*. New York; Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1981.
- Plutarch. *De cupiditate divitiarum*. Translated by Phillip H. De Lacy and Benedict Einarson. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959.
- Poortman, Bartel. "Death and Immortality in Greek Philosophy: From the Presocratics to the Hellenistic Era." Pages 197-220 in *Hidden Futures: Death and Immortality in Ancient Egypt, Anatolia, the Classical, Biblical and Arabic-Islamic World*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1994.
- Purdue, Leo G. "Cosmology and the Social Order in the Wisdom Tradition." Pages 457-78 in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. Edited by John G. Gammie and Leo G. Purdue. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990.

- Quaegebeur, Jan. "Cultes égyptiens et grecs en Egypte hellénistique: L'exploitation des sources." Pages 303-24 in *Egypt and the Hellenistic World: Proceedings of the international colloquium, Leuven 24-26 May 1982*. Edited by E. van't Dack, P. van Dessel, and W. van Gucht. Louvain: Orientaliste, 1983.
- Rad, Gerhard von. "The Joseph Narrative and Ancient Wisdom." Pages 292-300 in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*. Edited by Gerhard von Rad. Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1966. Reprint, New York: KTAV, 1976.
- . *Old Testament Theology. Vol. I: The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions*. Translated by D. M. G. Stalker; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1962.
- . *Wisdom in Israel*. London: SCM, 1972.
- Rahlf, Alfred. *Septuaginta*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979.
- Ramage, Edwin S., David L. Sigsbee, and Sigmund C. Fredericks, eds. *Roman Satirists and Their Satire*. Park Ridge, NJ: Noyes Press, 1974.
- Reines, C. W. "Kohleth on Wisdom and Wealth." *JJS* 5 (1954): 80-84.
- Reiterer, Friedrich V. "Deutung und Wertung des Todes durch Ben Sira." Pages 203-36 in *Die alttestamentliche Botschaft als Wegweisung: Festschrift für Heinz Reinelt*. Edited by Josef Zmijewski. Stuttgart: Katholischer Bibelwerk, 1990.
- . "Review of Recent Research on the Book of Ben Sira (1980-1996)." In *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research: Proceedings of the First International Ben Sira Conference 28-31 July 1996 Soesterberg, Netherlands*. Edited by Pancratius C. Beentjes. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1997.
- . *Zählsynopse zum buch Ben Sira*. Fontes et Subsidia ad Bibliam pertinentes 1. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003.
- Rengstorff, Karl Heinrich. *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*. 3 vols. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1952.
- Ricoeur, Paul. "Biblical Hermeneutics." *Semeia* 4 (1975): 29-148.
- . *Conflict of Interpretations*. Evanston: Northwestern University, 1974.
- Riggs, Christina. *The Beautiful Burial in Roman Egypt: Art, Identity, and Funerary Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith. *Narrative Fiction*. New York: Methuen, 1983.
- Robbins, Vernon K. *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Robinson, James M. *The Coptic Gnostic Library: A Complete Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices*. 5 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2000.
- . "Jesus as Sophos and Sophia: Wisdom Tradition and the Gospels." Pages 1-16 in *Aspects of Wisdom in Judaism and Early Christianity*. Edited by Robert L. Wilken. Notre Dame/London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975.

- Robinson, James M. and Helmut Koester, *Trajectories through Early Christianity*. Philadelphia, 1971.
- Rosen, Ralph M. *Making Mockery: The Poetics of Ancient Satire*. Classical Culture and Society. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Rowe, C. Kavin. "History, Hermeneutics and the Unity of Luke-Acts." *JSNT* 28 (2005): 131-57.
- . "Literary Unity and Reception History: Reading Luke-Acts as Luke and Acts." *JSNT* 29 (2007): 449-57.
- Rudd, Niall. *Themes in Roman Satire*. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1986.
- Rudman, Dominic. *Determinism in the Book of Ecclesiastes*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001.
- Sacks, Sheldon. *Fiction and the Shape of Belief*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966.
- Salyer, Gary D. *Vain Rhetoric: Private Insight and Public Debate in Ecclesiastes*. JSOTSup 327. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001.
- Sanders, E. P. "Testament of Abraham." Pages 871-902 in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Edited by James H. Charlesworth. Vol. 1. New York: Doubleday & Company, 1983.
- Sanders, Gabriel. *Lapides memores: Paiens et chrétiens face à la mort: le témoignage de l'épigraphie funéraire latine*. Edited by Angela Donati, Dorothy Pikhuis and Marc van Uytfanghe. Epigrafia e antichità 11. Faenza: Fratelli Lega, 1991.
- Sanders, J. T. *Ben Sira and Demotic Wisdom*. SBLMS 28. Chico: Scholars Press, 1983.
- Sandmel, Samuel. "Parallelomania." *JBL* 81 (1962): 1-13.
- Sandoval, Timothy J. *The Discourse of Wealth and Poverty in the Book of Proverbs*. Biblical Interpretation Series 77. Leiden: Brill, 2006.
- Scaer, Peter J. *The Lukan Passion and the Praiseworthy Death*. NTM 10. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005.
- Schmidt, Francis. *Le Testament grec d' Abraham: Introduction, édition critique des deux recensions grecques, traduction*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1986.
- . "Le Testament d' Abraham: Introduction, édition de la recension courte, traduction et notes." 2 vols. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Strasbourg, 1971.
- Schlatter, Adolf. *The History of the Christ: The Foundation for New Testament Theology*. Translated by Andreas J. Köstenberger. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997.
- Schottroff, Luise. *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*. Gütersloher Verlaghaus: GmbH, 2005.
- Schottroff, Luise and Wolfgang Stegemann. *Jesus and the Hope of the Poor*. Translated by Matthew J. O'Connell. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1986.

- Schrader, Lutz. "Beruf, Arbeit und Mue als Sinnerfüllung bei Jesus Sirach." Pages 117-49 in *Der Einzelne und seine Gemeinschaft bei Ben Sira*. Edited by Renate Egger-Wenzel and Ingrid Krammer. BZAW 270. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1998.
- Schwienhorst-Schönberger, L. *Nicht im Menschen Gründet das Glück (Koh 2:24): Kohelet im Spannungsfeld jüdischer Weisheit und hellenistischer Philosophie*. Freiburg: Herder, 1994.
- Scott, Bernard Brandon. *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989.
- . "Jesus as Sage: An Innovative Voice in Common Wisdom." Pages 399-415 in *Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. Edited by John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
- . *Re-Imagine the World: An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus*. Santa Rosa, Calif.: Polebridge Press, 2001.
- Seccombe, David Peter. *Possessions and the Poor in Luke-Acts*. Linz: Fuchs, 1983.
- Sellew, Philip. "Interior Monologue as a Narrative Device in the Parables of Luke." *CBQ* 54/3 (1992): 239-53.
- Seneca. *Epistulae Morales*. Translated by Richard M. Gummere. Loeb Classical Library. 3 vols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925.
- Seng, Egbert W. "Der Reiche Tor: Eine Untersuchung von Lk. Xii 16-21 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung form- und motivgeschichtlicher Aspekte." *NovT* 20 (1978): 136-155.
- Seow, C. L. *Ecclesiastes: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. AB 18c. New York: Doubleday, 1997.
- . "Linguistic Evidence and the Dating of Qoheleth." *JBL* 115/4 (1996): 643-66.
- Shulz, Fritz. *Classical Roman Law*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951.
- Simon, L. *Une Ethique de la Sagesse: Commentaire de l'épître de Jacques*. Geneve: Editions Labor et Fides, 1961.
- Skehan, Patrick W. and Alexander Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira: A New Translation with Notes, Introduction, and Commentary*. AB 39. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1987.
- Snodgrass, Klyne. *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.
- Sokoloff, Michael. *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period*. 2d ed. Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar Ilan University, 2002.
- Sommer, Benjamin D. *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40-66*. Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Sparks, Kenton L. "The Song of Songs: Wisdom for Young Jewish Women." *CBQ* 70/2 (2008): 277-99.
- Spencer, Alan Jeffrey. *Death in Ancient Egypt*. 2nd ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984.

- Stacy, R. Wayne. "Luke 12:13-21: The Parable of the Rich Fool." *Review and Expositor* 94 (1997): 285-92.
- Stagg, Frank. *Studies in Luke's Gospel*. Nashville: Convention, 1965.
- Sterling, Gregory E. *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephos, Luke-Acts and Apologetic Historiography*. Leiden: Brill, 1992.
- . "Mors Philosophi: The Death of Jesus in Luke." *HTR* 94/4 (2001): 383-402.
- Stone, Michael E., trans. *The Testament of Abraham: The Greek Recensions*. Society of Biblical Literature, 1972.
- Strauss, David Friedrich. *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*. Translated by George Eliot. 4th German ed. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972.
- Suggs, M. J. *Wisdom, Christology, and Law in Matthew's Gospel*. Cambridge, MA: 1970.
- Sullivan, J. P. "Epigrams and Satire." Pages 1495-1503 in *Civilization of the Ancient Mediterranean: Greece and Rome*. Edited by Michael Grant and Rachel Kitzinger. 3 vols. New York: Scribners, 1988.
- Swanson, Reuben, ed. *New Testament Greek Manuscripts: Variant Readings arranged in Horizontal Lines against Codex Vaticanus. Luke*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995.
- Talbert, Charles H. *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel*. New York: Crossroad, 1982.
- Tannehill, Robert C. *Luke*. Abingdon New Testament Commentaries. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996.
- . *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*. 2 vols. Foundations and Facets Series. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986, 1990.
- Taylor, Charles. *The Dirge of Coheleth in Ecclesiastes XII, Discussed and Literally Interpreted*. London: Williams and Norgate, 1874.
- Tcherikover, V. "Jerusalem on the Eve of the Hellenistic Reform" In *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*. Edited by V. Tcherikover. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1961.
- Terrien, Samuel. "Amos and Chokmah." Pages 108-15 in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage*. Edited by B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson. New York: Harper & Bros., 1962.
- Thayer, Joseph H. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1977.
- Tucker, Jeffrey T. *Example Stories: Perspectives on Four Parables in the Gospel of Luke*. JSNTSS 162. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.
- Tuckett, Christopher M. *Luke*. New Testament Guides. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.

- Turner, Nigel. "The Testament of Abraham: A Study of the Original Language, Place of Origin, Authorship, and Relevance." Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1953.
- Ulrich, Eugene. "Ezra and Qoheleth Manuscripts from Qumran (4QEzra, 4QQoh^{A,B})." Pages 139-57 in *Priests, Prophets and Scribes: Essays on the Formation and Heritage of Second Temple Judaism in Honour of Joseph Blenkinsopp*. Edited by Eugene Ulrich et al. JSOTSup 149. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992.
- VanderKam, James C. *An Introduction to Early Judaism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Van Koetsveld, C.E., *De Gelijkenissen van den Zaligmaker*. 2 vols. Utrecht: Schoonhoven, 1869.
- Van Peursen, W.Th. *Language and Interpretation in the Syriac Text of Ben Sira: A Comparative Linguistic and Literary Study*. Monographs of the Peshitta Institute: Studies in the Syriac Versions of the Bible and their Cultural Contexts 16. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2007.
- Venit, Marjorie S. *Monumental Tombs of Ancient Alexandria: The Theater of the Dead*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Verhey, Allen. *Remembering Jesus: Christian Community, Scripture, and the Moral Life*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.
- Via, Dan Otto. *The Parables: Their Literary and Existential Dimension*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967.
- Volten, A. "Der Begriff der Maat in den ägyptischen Weisheitstexten." Pages 73-101 in *Les Sagesses du proche-orient ancient*. Edited by J. Leclant. Paris: Presses universitaires, 1963.
- Volz, Paul. *Hiob und Weisheit*. Die Schriften des Alten Testaments 3/2. 2nd ed. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1921.
- Wailes, Stephen L. *Medieval Allegories of Jesus' Parables*. Publications of the UCLA Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies. Vol. 23. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
- Ward, James M. "The Servant's Knowledge in Isaiah 40-55." Pages 121-136 in *Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien*. Edited by John G. Gammie et al. New York: Union Theological Seminary, 1978.
- Weeber, Karl-Wilhelm. *Luxus im alten Rom. Die öffentliche Pracht*. Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 2006.
- Wenham, David. "The Purpose of Luke-Acts: Israel's Story in the Context of the Roman Empire." Pages 79-103 in *Reading Luke: Interpretation, Reflection, Formation*. Scripture and Hermeneutics Series. Vol. 6. Edited by Craig G. Bartholomew et al. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.
- Werline, Rodney A. "The Psalms of Solomon and the Ideology of Rule." Pages 69-87 in *Conflicted Boundaries in Wisdom and Apocalypticism*. Edited by Benjamin G.

- Wright III and Lawrence M. Wills. SBLSS 35. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005.
- Westermann, Claus. *Grundformen prophetischer Rede*. München: Chr. Kaiser, 1964.
- Whedbee, J. W. *Isaiah and Wisdom*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1971.
- Wheeler, Sondra Ely. *Wealth as Peril and Obligation: The New Testament on Possessions*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Whitley, Charles. *Koheleth, His Language and Thought*. Beihefte für die Zeitschrift für die alltestamentlicher Wissenschaft 148. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1979.
- Whybray, R. N. *Ecclesiastes*. NCBC. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989.
- . "The Identification and Use of Quotations in Ecclesiastes." Pages 435-51 in *Congress Volume, Vienna, 1980*. Edited by J. A. Emerton. VTSup 32. Leiden: Brill, 1981.
- . "Prophecy and Wisdom." Pages 181-99 in *Israel's Prophetic Tradition*. P. Ackroyd Festschrift. Edited by R. Coggins et al. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- . "Qoheleth, Preacher of Joy." *JSOT* 23 (1982): 87-98.
- Wiefel, Wolfgang. *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*. Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsgesellschaft, 1988.
- Williams, James G. *Those Who Ponder Proverbs: Aphoristic Thinking and Biblical Literature*. Bible and Literature Series. Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1981.
- . "What Does It Profit a Man?: The Wisdom of Koheleth." Pages 375-89 in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*. Edited by James L. Crenshaw. New York: Ktav, 1976.
- Wilson, R. McL. *Studies in the Gospel of Thomas*. London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1960.
- Wilson, Walter T. "A Third Form of Righteousness: The Theme and Contribution of Matthew 6.19-7.12 in the Sermon on the Mount." *NTS* 53 (2007): 303-24.
- . *Love without Pretense: Romans 12:9-21 and Hellenistic-Jewish Wisdom Literature*. WUNT 2. Reihe 46. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991.
- . *The Mysteries of Righteousness: The Literary Composition and Genre of the Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994.
- . *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides*. CEJL. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2005.
- Winter, Michael M. "Theological Alterations in the Syriac Translation of Ben Sira." *CBQ* 70/2 (2008): 300-312.
- Wischmeyer, Oda. *Die Kultur des Buches Jesus Sirach*. BZNW 77. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1994.
- Wolff, H. W. *Amos the Prophet*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973.

- Wolter, Michael. *Das Lukasevangelium*. Handbuch zum Neuen Testament 5. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008.
- Wright III, Benjamin G. "The Discourse of Riches and Poverty in the Book of Ben Sira." Pages 559-78 in vol. 2 of *SBL Seminar Papers*, 1998. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998.
- . "New Perspectives on Biblical Vocabulary and Translation Technique: Sirach in Relation to its Presumed Hebrew 'Vorlage'" Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1988.
- . *No Small Difference: Sirach's Relationship to its Hebrew Parent Text*. Septuagint and Cognate Studies 26. Atlanta: Scholars, 1989.
- . "Putting the Puzzle Together: Suggestions Concerning the Social Location of the Wisdom of Ben Sira." Pages 89-112 in *Conflicted Boundaries in Wisdom and Apocalypticism*. Edited by Benjamin G. Wright III and Lawrence M. Wills. SBLSS 35. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005.
- Wright, N. T. *Jesus and the Victory of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God*. Vol 2. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996.
- Wright, Stephen I. "Parables on Poverty and Riches (Luke 12:13-21; 16:1-13; 16:19-31)." Pages 217-39 in *The Challenge of Jesus' Parables*. Edited by Richard N. Longenecker. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.
- Yoder, John Howard. *The Politics of Jesus*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.
- Zandee, Jan. *Death as an Enemy: According to Ancient Egyptian Conceptions*. Studies in the History of Religions. SHR 5. Leiden: Brill, 1960.
- Ziegler, Joseph., ed. *Sapientia Iesu Filii Sirach*. Septuaginta, Vetus Testamentum Graecum 12.2. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965.