

CHOOSING THE LOWEST SEAT: LK 14,7-11

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I. INTRODUCTION

Luke arranged four consecutive episodes in ch.14, setting them in a Sabbath, therefore a relatively sumptuous meal, while the last episode is scenically unconnected, addressed to a crowd. Indeed Lk 14,26 commences with the infelicitous demand that a disciple “hates” father and mother, cutting his social roots¹, and continues at vv. 28-32 with the amusing pictures of a would-be tower-builder and a king going to war, who have been dealt with before². However, both the tower-building (perspicuous to historians of Italian cities) and the war-making are concerned with prestige, with honour-and-shame (so v. 29)³, considerations arising in all three sections following the cure of the dropsical man. That set, without a clue, appear, as they did to C.

¹ J. D. M. DERRETT, “Hating father and mother (Luke 14,26; Matthew 10,37)”: *Downside Rev.* 409 (1999) 251-272.

² J. D. M. DERRETT, “‘Nisi Dominus aedificaverit domum’: towers and wars”: *N.T.* 19 (1977) 241-261 (*Studies in the New Testament* III [Leiden 1982] 85-106).

³ Lk 14,9-10. J. G. PERISTIANY (ed.), *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* (Chicago 1966); R. L. ROHRBAUGH, “Legitimizing sonship - a test of honour”, in: P. F. ESLER (ed.), *Modelling Early Christianity* (London & New York 1995) 183-197, esp. 184-185; BRAUN, *Feasting* (n. 5 below) 5, 100 n. 4; J. H. NEYREY, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville 1998); J. J. PILCH-B. J. MALINA (eds.), *Handbook of Biblical Social Values* (Peabody 1998) 41 (appearances are deceptive), 106-115 (honour / shame), 118-120 (humility); B. J. MALINA-R. L. ROHRBAUGH, *Social Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis 1998) 121-124.

F. Evans (below), independent, heterogeneous, and incoherent fragments. But Luke deals with honour and shame extensively and subtly⁴.

That honour and shame dominate the chapter is indeed perceived by Willi Braun, whose thesis on Lk 14⁵ influences research in this area⁶, though, despite its awesome apparatus and expertise, it deliberately neglects half the subject. Braun is obsessed with Greek rhetorical theories with which Luke may have acquainted himself. No doubt he suspects that if Luke obtained his material from diverse sources his results ought to be read as a literary and thematic whole⁷. Braun's predecessor, X. de Meeûs⁸, placed Lk 14 firmly within the genre symposiaque grec⁹, and defined the theme of the principal guest's (Jesus's) contribution as poverty and humility¹⁰ (rather than love and chastity-sobriety)¹¹. De Meeûs made no use whatsoever of Old Testament material, even though he had before him the extremely stimulating theory of C. F. Evans¹², to which we must refer later.

These two scholars reject all search into Luke's Jewish apparatus. Two calamities result. Firstly all biblical and Jewish religious background to vv. 1-2 is jettisoned, and even in places disparaged¹³. Secondly the teaching of Jesus seems to disappear behind a screen of Hellenistic literary technology. Nevertheless Braun's handling is so magisterial that subsequent research may, and perhaps must, use his handling as a way-mark¹⁴. We must,

⁴ S. L. LOVE, "Women and men at Hellenistic symposia meals in Luke", in: ESLER, *o. c.*, 198-210, esp. 202-203.

⁵ W. BRAUN, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric in Luke 14* (SNTS Mono. 85; Cambridge 1995). Braun uses 467 authors, many of whom are represented by three to six works, and not a few (e. g. Cicero, Plutarch, Lucian) are virtually encyclopedic. Braun is reviewed by URBÁN, *EB58* (2000) 140-142.

⁶ J. B. GREEN, *Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids 1997) 548-552.

⁷ BRAUN, *o. c.*, 14.

⁸ X. DE MEEÛS, "Composition de Lc XIV et genre symposiaque": *E. T. L.* 37 (1961) 847-870.

⁹ *O. c.*, 854-855. 870.

¹⁰ *O. c.*, 849. 851. 864. 870.

¹¹ *O. c.*, 864.

¹² C. F. EVANS, "The central section of St Luke's gospel", in: D. E. NINEHAM (ed.), *Studies in the Gospels FS R.H. Lightfoot* (Oxford 1955) 37-53, esp. 42-50; DE MEEÛS, *o. c.*, 853 n. 37, 869. When Evans published that essay he had been for some time a colleague of Austin Farrer, a genius whose delight was to investigate the New Testament in the light of the Old. See n. 119.

¹³ BRAUN, *o. c.*, 61 n. 53.

¹⁴ Earlier studies are not nullified. M. ZERWICK, "Vivamos la palabra de Dios. Los primeros puestos (Lc 14,7-11)": *Revista Bíblica* 26 (1964) 87-91.

therefore, pursue our present concern -Jesus's *placitum* on seeking the lowest seat -in the light of all vv. 1-24. One must cast one's net wide to catch our quarry.

II. LUKE14,1-6, THE DROPSICAL MAN¹⁵.

Though dropsy occurs as a by-product of various complaints, principally heart failure, chronic renal failure and nephrotic syndrome, all dropsy cases share one characteristic. Braun, noticing that Greek authors refer, almost proverbially, to one of its symptoms as typical, namely an irrational and dangerous thirst¹⁶, concludes that our dropsical man was an allegorical figure, meaning "craving desire", according to Cynics a model of consuming passion¹⁷. But there is no evidence that our sufferer craved anything. On the contrary his wretched condition evoked sympathy¹⁸. As Braun says, he had hardly been planted as part of a Pharisaical plot to trap Jesus, nor was he an uninvited guest as supposed by J. Ens in 1979¹⁹. Just as the man with the withered arm revealed his synagogue as paralysed²⁰ so the dropsical man revealed an aspect of the dinner-party. Craving is not the theme of ch.14, as we shall see, but rather swelling. Dropsy is first perceived by oedema, improper swellings. We do need to define what is meant by "swelling".

¹⁵ J. D. M. DERRETT, "Positive perspectives on two Lucan miracles": *Downside Rev.* 104 (1986) 272-287 (*Studies in the New Testament*, V [Leiden 1989] 129-144, esp. 134-138).

¹⁶ LONGINUS, *de Subl.* 3. 4., in: BRAUN, o. c., 29,35. Also *Ibid.*, 32 n. 33. POLYBIUS, 13.2.2; HORACE, *Carm.* II.2.13-16; OVID., *Fasti* 1.216. Cornelius a Lapide ad Lk 14,2. Cf. SENECA, *Ad Helv.* 11.3; For Philostratus see n. 35 below.

¹⁷ BRAUN, o. c., 22,30,41,174. He equates dropsy with avarice, attributed to Pharisees at Lk 16,14, at 33 n. 39, citing M. BILLERBECK, *Der Kyniker Demetrius* (Leiden 1979) 25 n. 48. That dropsy can suggest misers was a cynic idea: P. H. DE LACY-B. EINARSON, *Plutarch's Moralia VII* (London & Cambridge, MA 1968) 11 n. (c). At p. 38 Braun says dropsy is a symptom of addiction to luxury (not true to fact). At p. 174 a host's exalting himself is called "dropsical". For Luke and gluttons see BRAUN, o. c., 177,179.

¹⁸ Diabolical attack or mystical retribution: G. P. MURDOCH, *Theories of Illness* (Pittsburgh 1980) ch.3. Num 5,21-27. Hindus believed the dropsical suffered from the snare of Varuna, Lord of Waters (Manu VIII.82,106; IX. 244-245, 308).

¹⁹ BRAUN, o. c., 143.

²⁰ Lk 6,6. DERRETT, *Studies IV* (1986) 11-15.

In Greek²¹ and in Hebrew the idea of swelling, an improper rising up, is used as a metaphor for bumptiousness. In Latin the idea is constantly conveyed by the words *inflatio*, *inflatus*²², with which *elatio*, *elatus* are sometimes associated. *Tumeo* can be used similarly²³. The traditional English term is “puffed up”²⁴. Just as to be puffed up physically suggests heart-malfunction, so moral “being puffed up” is dangerous. Certain English near-synonyms must be dismissed: arrogance, since the arrogant person merely claims what is not his; conceit, since the conceited person may have good reasons for his self-esteem (which others ignore); and pride, otherwise queen of the vices²⁵ -since one can be proud of some thing without departing from honour or reason (Gal 6,3-5). These words would deflect us, and so does vanity, for one may be vain of one’s height, or of one’s status, without thereby depreciating the qualities of others. What we need is the idea of inflation, usually to be found in the (psychologically speaking) insecure, whereby, believing they are superior to others, they award themselves a higher rank, without justification. By contrast people of achievement, e. g. heavy-weight boxers, can esteem themselves accurately, and are modest.

One may ask, why bother about this? Bumptious people irritate those whose self-image they challenge, but such social ineptitude is not a sin. Yet in Hebrew there is an extensive vocabulary for “being puffed up”.

Rûm l'vāvô (Dt 17,20); *w^erām l'vāvekā* (Dt 8,12; cf. Hos 13,6; Is 2,11-12,17; 10,12); *rāmîm* (2 Sam 22,29 [28]). Aram. *rim libbēh* (Dan 5,20). *Gas libô* (presumptuous) (Mishna, *vAvôt* IV.7); *gas rūah* □ (haughty); *gasût lev* (presumptuousness, overbearing, supercilious, not gracious to every rank) (1 Kgs 12,7)²⁶. *Néšā ʔkā livekā* (2 Kgs 14,10; cf. 2 Chr 25,19). *Gā ʔôn, gē ʔût* (Ps 89,10; Jer 48,29); *gāvah libô* (2 Chr 26,16; 32,25-26; Ps 131,1-2), cf. 2

²¹ o;gkoj(ovgko,w(trufa,w (Jas 5,5). fusa,w in the active and middle voices: PLATO, *Alcib.* II.145E; *Antiphanes* 117; *Aristaenetus* 1.27 quoted by Wetstenius, H KAINH DIAQH KH. (1752), II,113; Herodas 2.32 (“pillars of society” th/| genh/| fusw/ntej); Dio Chrysostom 58.5 fusw/sa evpi. tw/| ge,nei; PLUTARCH, *Dem. & Cic.* II (= 887B). fu,shma: note ge,montej o;gkou kai. fush,matoj at PLUTARCH, *Mor.* 39D (to.n tu/fon(conceit). Note fusi,ow: I Cor 4,6.18.19; 5,2; 8,1; cf. 13,4; Col 2,18; 2 Cor 12,20; 2 Pet 2,18; Jude16. IGNATIUS, *Trall.* 7.1.

²² SUETONIUS, *Nero* 37.3.

²³ PROPERTIUS 3,6 (4,5), 3; *Phaedrus* 1.3,4; HORACE, *Ep.* 1.1,36; JUVENAL 8. 40.

²⁴ E. C. BREWER, *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (London 121975) 873.

²⁵ J. F. DELANY, *Catholic Encyclopedia* XII (1913) 405.

²⁶ MAIMONIDES, *Mishneh Torah* XIV.V.2,6 (trans. A. M. Hershman, *Code of Maimonides*. Book Fourteen. The Book of Judges, 1949, 211-212).

Cor 12,7; *gē jeh, gā jwâ, gē jîm* in rabbinical usage²⁷. Cf. also the Aram. *Yānîm* ()NY) (Tg. ps.-Jon., Dt 17,20).

It was evidently not just a clash of personalities. The condition (as the New Testament confirms) is sinful because of what we are told in Dt 17,19-20. The king should read in the Law daily, "That (even) his heart shall not be lifted up (cf. Dan 5,20 TH) above his brethren (LXX avpo. tw/n avdelfw/n auvtou/)²⁸ (according to the Tg. Neof. his heart must not be hardened against his brethren), and he shall not turn aside from the commandments to the right hand or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel". We understand that the king who prostitutes his heart and his eyes, removing them from the commandments, will not find someone who will sit on the throne of his father²⁹. This applies to all leading personalities or trustees (*parnāsîm*), none of whom should disdain his "brethren"³⁰; and it applies to one presiding at feasts (Sir 32,1-2). The righteous Joseph, Viceroy, actually followed this³¹.

Those who are "puffed up" automatically become unrighteous³², and the security of Israel depends on individuals not being "puffed up", whatever may be the immediate consequences for the individuals themselves. "Pride comes before a fall"³³ -sc. sin and Yahweh's vengeance. One may ask, what has this to do with Jesus's argument with the Pharisees before he performs his Sabbath healing? The argument alleges a parallel between rescuing a son or an ox from a pit³⁴ where he may drown³⁵, on the one hand, and a dropsical

²⁷ M. JASTROW, *Dictionary*, 202.

²⁸ J. W. WEVERS, *Notes on the Greek Text of Deuteronomy* (Atlanta 1995) 291.

²⁹ 11Q19 LIX. 13-15 (trans. F. García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls translated* [Leiden & Grand Rapids 1996] 175). Cf. *Ibid.*, LVI. 20-21.

³⁰ SIFRE, Dt §162 (ed. Finkelstein, 212-213; trans. Hammer, 1986, 454). R. Hillel b. Eliakim says, "He shall be warned not to disdain his brethren".

³¹ Test. Jos. XVII.8.

³² Targ. ps.-Jon. speaks about the horses (Dt 17,16), "Lest the princes ride upon them, become proud, and neglect the words of the Law". See Dt 8,12-14; Ps 59,12; 101,5b; 86,14; Ezk 16,49; Zeph 2,10; 3,11. On complacency see Ps 49,18; cf. Sir 10,19d. "A man in whom there is haughtiness ultimately stumbles over a married woman" (R. Johanan at Bab. Talm., Sôtâh 4b). Arrogance (*gā jôn*) is hated: Ps 5,5; 75,4; Prov 8,13; 11,2; 13,10; Is 13,11; cf. Rom 1,30. This is why modesty has God's favour: Sir 3,17-18.

³³ Prov 11,2; 16,18; 18,12.

³⁴ Ps 55,23 = LXX Ps 54,24. Ps 40,3 (2) = LXX Ps 39,3; cf. Prov 26,27; Ex 21,33-34. Mishnah, B. Q. V. For *fr̄e,ar* in metaphor see PLATO, *Theaet.* 174c. In Greek there are six common words for "pit", amongst which *fr̄e,ar* does not figure: the latter suggests "well" or

man on the other, whose want of proper irrigation is indeed dangerous to health so that a cure if possible is not to be postponed. So much is evident from Ps 69,15-18. Whatever we think of this line of reasoning -which silences us as it did the potentially difficult Pharisees-hiding under the surface is the suggestion that being “puffed up” is also amenable to cure, and that too at a dinner, and on a Sabbath. The physical case prepares for the metaphorical treatment and the former increases the impact of the latter³⁶. Jesus dismisses the man³⁷ not simply because his cure would emerge better outside, but because his kind of “swelling” called for no metaphorical cure.

III. LK 14,7-11, CHOOSING THE LOWEST SEAT

The source of the idea of making for the least honourable place, which, if taken literally, is barely practicable, is obviously Prov 25,6-7, as has been known since critical scholarship began³⁸. Sir 3,17-20 is relevant, as is also known³⁹: equally well known is the alternative version to Lk 14:7-11 preserved

“cistern”. One compares CD 11.13-14 (cf. 4QD^c3,10-11), which would put the Pharisees in the wrong. See also 4Q251 fr. 2,5-7: R. H. EISENMAN-M. WISE, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered* (Shaftesbury 1992) 202, 204.

³⁵ BRAUN, *o. c.*, 29 calls this idea absurd and far-fetched, rejecting M. GOULDER, *Luke: a New Paradigm* (JSNT Supp. 20; Sheffield 1989) 584. But see DIOGENES LAERTIUS 9. 4 and PHILOSTRATUS, *Vita Apoll.* 1.9 (L. C. L., Philostratus I, 22).

³⁶ H. J. SCHONFIELD, *Those Incredible Christians. A New Look at the Early Church* (London 1968) 47-48.

³⁷ BAUER-ARNDT-GINGRICH, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago & Cambridge 1957), ἀρπολυ, w, 2b. Lk 8,38. So J. A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel according to Luke II* (AB; Garden City, NY 1985) 1041. Denied by BRAUN, *o. c.*, 41 n. 56.

³⁸ Cornelius a Lapide; S. Clark; Bengel; FIELD (*Notes*, 1899, 66); JÜLICHER (1910); CREED, *Luke* (1950) 189-190; I. H. MARSHALL, *Luke* (1978); L. MORRIS, *Luke* (1977) 230-232; M. D. GOULDER (1978) 206, (1989) 584; EVANS, *Luke* (1990) 570-571; HENDRICKX (1986) 112; A. E. HARVEY, *Strenuous Commands* (London 1990) 172. B. H. YOUNG, *Jesus and his Jewish Parables* (Mahwah 1989) 245-251. J. NOLLAND, *Luke 9:21-18:34* (WBC; Dallas 1993) 749. A.T. CADOUX, *Parables of Jesus* (London 1931) 95-96 places Prov 25,6-7 on “an ethically lower plane”, the advice a piece of pseudo-cunning. C. WESTERMAN, *The Parables of Jesus in the lighth of the Old Testament* (EV; Edinburgh 1990) 190 does *not* mention Prov 25,6-7 or 1 Sam 9.

³⁹ Cited by Green *inter alios*.

at Mt 20:28 in the Codex Bezae, etc⁴⁰. According to Green both Prov 25,6-7 and Sir 3,17-20 are analogues of Lk 14,9-10⁴¹. *Immo* the former is the source of it. Midrash Rabbah, Leviticus I.5 (to 1,1: Soncino trans., 9)⁴² shows early rabbis offering a precept like Jesus's based on Prov. 25,7. What is not well known is that there are many cases in the Law and the historical books for the proposition (see below) that those who are low in status may be called to very high places.

The problem of precedence, and of seatings at gatherings of more than a very few friends, occurred⁴³ and arises universally. Orders of precedence were very well known to the ancient Jews⁴⁴. People can compete for a prominent place⁴⁵, hoping to display their importance and to avoid embarrassing their inferiors by joining them. Some societies have tried to find general rules. According to Josephus one distributed places according to

⁴⁰ K. ALAND, *Synopsis* (1964) 301; E. PREUSCHEN, *Antilegomena* (Giessen ²1905) 29 (§22); J. JEREMIAS, *Unknown Sayings of Jesus* (London ¹1957) 6-7; E. HENNECKE, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* (Tübingen ²1924) 34; M. BLACK, *Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (Oxford ³1967) 171-175. BRAUN, *o. c.*, 47 doubts whether Luke needed *any* source.

⁴¹ GREEN (n. 6 above) at 552 n. 133.

⁴² LIGHTFOOT; SCHÖTTGEN; C. B. MICHAELIS (1720); WETSTENIUS, HABERSHON (1904); H. STRACK-P. BILLERBECK, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament* II (Munich 1961) 204; BUTTRICK (1928); JEREMIAS, *Parables* (1963) 191-193; MORRIS, *Luke*; MARSHALL, *Luke*; NOLLAND (1993) 749; D. L. BOCK, *Luke* II (Grand Rapids 1996) 1260-1265. An allergy to rabbinical sources being widespread, it is curious how widely this passage is cited.

⁴³ PLUTARCH, *Mor.* 616B (L. C. L., *Plutarch's Moralia* VIII. 28). THEOPHRASTUS, *Char.* 21.2; SENECA, *De ira* 3.37.4. The quarrel at PLUTARCH, *Mor.* 148F-149F (L. C. L., *Plut. Mor.* II. 362-368) puts one in the picture. LUCIAN, *Symp.* 8-9 (L. C. L., *Lucian* I. 420) (very instructive); *Id.*, *De mercede conductis* 26 εἰνὶ τοῦ πύθου, (an affecting passage: L. C. L., *Lucian* III. 456). DE MEEÛS, *o. c.*, 865 cites PLATO's, *Symposium*. Pirque de Rabbi Eliezer 2 (trans. G. Friedlander, 1916-1981, 5-6). See Jas 2,3: "Sit here in a good place... Stand, or sit under my footstool". At the theatre: PLUTARCH, *Cicero* 13.2-4. Actual instances of promotion or reduction are related by a Mr Morier and a Dr E. D. Clarke in 19th cent. Muslim homes: THOMAS SCOTT, *Bible*, new edn. W. Symington (London 1841) III.166 *ad loc.* See ARISTOPH., *Ranes* 761-767, 777-778, 1515-1523.

⁴⁴ J. JEREMIAS, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (EV; London 1976) 203-204, 208, 212, 213, 271-272.

⁴⁵ Mt 23,6; Mk 12,39; Lk 11,43 and 20,46. ARISTOTLE, *Rhet.* 1.5.9 (1361a); POLYBIUS 2.56.15; HERMAS, *Vis.* III.9.7. Ps. 107,32. PLUTARCH, *Brut.* 34.8 (L. C. L., *Plutarch's Lives* VI. 202); PETRONIUS, *Satyricon* 70 (L. C. L., *Petronius and Seneca* 136). Bab. Talm., 'Eruv. 85b-86a (Soncino trans., 596)(STRACK-BILLERBECK, *o. c.*, II, 204). Cf. VALERIUS MAXIMUS, *fact. et dict. mem.* II.1-9. Jer. Talm., *Ber.* 11,2 (J. LIGHTFOOT, *Works* [London 1823] XII. 144), alluding to Sir 11,1b Heb. (VATTIONI, *o. c.*, 55).

guests' ranks (tou.j to,pouj kata. th.n avxi,an) (for a;xioj and rank see Herod. 1.157), a passage of great importance for us (the attitude of Hyrcanus)⁴⁶. This system was turned into a rule by the hierarchically-minded Qumran sect (1QSa 2,11.14.15.17.21), "in the order of his dignity (*kāvôd*, see Mishnah, *Avôt* IV.12)", rigidly adhered to (1QS II.23).

Even such a method is not perfect. Suppose a 'prima donna' disputes the seat of honour with the secretary of a trades union: how is one to rank them? Hosts who are wise have only one guest of honour, and other rankings are coped with on a broad basis (not always to guests' satisfaction). Where guests are nominally equal, e. g. members of a guild, a useful rule is to seat them by seniority. The Jews, finding subtle rules inadequate, eventually ranked guests by age⁴⁷ (as suggested by Gen 43,33), the one criterion against which no objection can be urged⁴⁸. But then the host may find he has the nearly senile, or people of predictable opinions beside him. Ancient India had a long established rule, of doubtful practical value⁴⁹: the most important people took the most important seats, the least important the lesser seats (Jesus's "lowest seat"), and the middling folk shared the host's position. Where the society consisted of persons nearly equal one could be more definite: the Buddha ruled that monks should sit precisely in order of seniority⁵⁰ according to the dates of ordination. But, and here we have some contact with Jesus's precept, where a senior person, coming late, tried to force a whole row to shift downwards, this was forbidden⁵¹ -and in the Hindu sources we are told that late comers cannot expect the same attention as the

⁴⁶ JOSEPHUS, *Ant.* 12. 210 discussed by JÜLICHER, *Gleichnisreden Jesu* II (Tübingen ²1910) 247-248. Of interest is Aristippus's remark at Diogenes Laertius 2.73. STOBÆUS, *Flor.* 13. 36.

⁴⁷ Tosefta, *Ber.* 5.5 (12); STRACK-BILLERBECK, *o. c.*, I. 914-915. "Most respected" = *gādôl* ("great"). STRACK-BILLERBECK, *o. c.*, IV/2. 618. E. SCHWEIZER, *Luke* (London 1984) 234-237 alludes to this. ARISTEAS, 187.

⁴⁸ See Lev 19,32; Job 12,12; 15,10; 30,1; Prov 16,31; Is 3,4-5; but cf. Job 32,6-9.

⁴⁹ Gautama-dharmasūtra V. 38; Yājñavalkya-smṛti 1.107. For Manu III.107 (with Kullūka) see trans. of G. Bühler, *Laws of Manu* (SBE 25; Oxford 1886) 94 (Medhātīthi says *upāsana* ("service") means "sitting with them and talking to them"); W. DONIGER with B. K. SMITH, *Laws of Manu* (London 1991) 54.

⁵⁰ Vinaya-pitaka, Culla-vagga (Vin. ii), VI. 6,2-4, trans. T. W. RHYS DAVIDS and H. OLDENBERG, *Vinaya Texts Pt. III* (SBE 20; Oxford 1885) 191-195. See also, for the ascertainment of leadership by seniority, Jātaka 37, trans. T. W. RHYS DAVIDS, *Buddhist Birth Stories or Jātaka Tales* (London 1880) 310-314.

⁵¹ *Culla-vagga* VI.10,1 (trans. RHYS DAVIDS, *Vinaya Texts* III, 198-199).

others⁵². One is reminded of Luke by a scene in the vinaya⁵³: when news of an unseemly dispute over seating came to him the Buddha asked his companions what were the criteria for precedence. These went over familiar ground, referring to the former castes of the monks, their spiritual gifts, learning, etc⁵⁴. All these suggested criteria were swept aside in favour of the solution some Jews adopted - rank must accrue by seniority. As for Buddhist nuns, an amusing difference was decreed⁵⁵. These could indeed squabble over seats, beds, etc. Cornelius à Lapide perceived long afterwards that less educated men and socially aspiring women were the most alert to questions of precedence⁵⁶. Meanwhile the Buddha decreed that eight senior nuns should sit in exact order of seniority, the remainder in the order as they entered the room -which perhaps did not avoid the modern problem how to pass through a doorway⁵⁷.

Of course it is all about “inflation”, about being “puffed up”. An ascetic needs no precedence⁵⁸. A modest person does not care where he sits. The puffed up person is “lifted up amidst his brethren”, and requires the best seat -provided he does not find the other guests utterly beneath him⁵⁹. Jesus advises, choose the least honourable seat available⁶⁰, because, by being shifted upwards automatically, as even less aspiring persons come below you, your status is established⁶¹. Lk 14,11 is used here not to preach

⁵² *Manu* III. 108.

⁵³ See n. 50 above and n. 54 below.

⁵⁴ Various criteria offered: *Culla-vagga* VI. 6,2 (trans. RHYS DAVIDS-H. OLDENBERG, o. c., 192-193). Cf. PS. PLATO, *Axiochus* 371 D.

⁵⁵ *Culla-vagga* X. 18 (trans. RHYS DAVIDS-H. OLDENBERG, o. c., 355-356). Cf. *Bhiksuni-vinaya of the Ārya-Mahāsāṅghika -Lokottaravādins*, ed. Gustav Roth (Tibetan Skt. Works Ser. 12; Patna 1970) 323 (§292).

⁵⁶ “De iis inter se certabant et contendebant, uti etiam num subinde fit in convivia praesertim a feminis nobilibus et viris parvi cerebri”.

⁵⁷ The English say, “Age before honour!” , seldom appreciated.

⁵⁸ But even in India ascetics have been known to be conceited: M. HARA, “Pāśupata and Yoga”: *Asiatische Studien* 53/3 (1999) 593-608 at 605.

⁵⁹ PLUTARCH, *Septem* 148A, 147E; *Quaest. conviv.* 708D, 709A-B.

⁶⁰ ;Escatoj and evla,cisto] do not mean “last”, “least”, but “low”, “insignificant”. See Mt 5,19; 25,40.45; Mk 9,35; Lk 2,26; 16,10; 19,17; 1 Cor 6,2. BLACK, o. c., 117-118. There is no need for Jülicher’s “granum salis” (Mt 5,39 is not a parallel).

⁶¹ Forgetting that human honour is worth little: Lk 6,26; Jas 4,4. Midrash R., Gen. L. 3.

revolution but to show how human behaviour provides a clue (sometimes) to the divine judgement.

Now Braun scouts the idea that Lk 14 is eschatologically aligned, as commentatorial tradition has held⁶². Exactly the same figure was used by Dio Chrystostom (AD 40/50 to post 110) (XXX, "Charidemus", 29), and so eschatology may not be irrelevant. Verbs in the passive voice often indicate God's activity. This is the case at v.14 and it must be so at v.11. God will elevate whom he wills⁶³, and to be elevated one must have a low status. Some must then be displaced. Prestige is a "limited good"⁶⁴. The gain of one is the loss of another. Since this verse is affixed as a comment on vv. 7-10, the imaginary host, unconsciously mimicking God's "behaviour"⁶⁵, setting the poor with princes (Ps 113,6-8), models what will happen at the End of Days⁶⁶, as a guest piously suggests at Lk 14:15 -a verse with which Braun wastes no time⁶⁷. An alternative view, that the kingdom is already present and a feast offered by God to the "poor", is worthy of consideration⁶⁸ (cf. Mt 18,4) but need not detain us now, though there is no seniority in the World to Come⁶⁹.

⁶² BRAUN, o. c., 3,137. N. 66 below. See Mt 21,31; Lk 7,50; 19,9.

⁶³ Ezk 17,24; Dan 4,37. HORACE, *Carm.* 1.34,12-14. Ps 18,28 (27); 75,7-8 (6-7); Prov 3,34 (1 Pet 5,5); 29,23; Is 2,11-12.17; 23,9; Sir 10,14; Lk 1,52. Aristeeas 263. BRAUN, o. c., 47 n.11 cites pagan sources.

⁶⁴ Is 23,9; 2 Cor 11,7. The discovery of the "limited good" (George Foster), illustrated at PHILO, in *Flaccum* 29 (L. C. L., *Philo* IX. 318) is dealt with by Neyrey at PILCH-MALINA, *Handbook* (n. 3 above) 122-127. Therefore Lk 13,28; DIOGENES LAERTIUS 4.51. But see Rom 12,15. See also MALINA-ROHRBAUGH, *Social-Science* (n. 3 above) 122.

⁶⁵ Lk 17,7-10 (cited by JEREMIAS, *Parables*, o. c., 193) is a good example of this. Note also Lk 12,37.46.58-59 and 13,6-9. Jn 4,35. Perhaps this answers J. D. CROSSAN's, "Parable and example in the teaching of Jesus": *N.T.S.* 18 (1971-2) 285-307 at 301.

⁶⁶ The image of the Banquet is frequent in the gospels, indeed permeates them. Ps 65,5 (4) (LXX 64,5); Cant 7,2; Is 25,6-9; 55,1; 65,13; Am 9,11-14; Zeph 1,7 (out of context). Lk 13,28-29; 22,30. JÜLICHER, o. c., II. 409. HENDRICKX (1986) 113; I. H. MARSHALL, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Exeter 1979) 141; NOLLAND, *Luke 9,21-18,34* (1993) 747; J. D. M. DERRETT, "Modes of renewal": *E. Q.* 72/1 (2000) 3-12.

⁶⁷ BRAUN, o. c., 62-64 (Lk 14,15 as Luke's invention). For Lk 14,15 see STRACK-BILLERBECK, *Kommentar*, o. c., II. 483, Exk. *Sch^e*)/III. 4, nn. o ff. = Exkurs 31 (o. c., IV/2. 1016-1165); cf. Exkurs 29, o. c., 799.

⁶⁸ D. WENHAM, *Parables of Jesus* (London 1989) 168.

⁶⁹ Bab. Talm., *Ber.* 17a (a saying of Rab). Heb II,40; Rev 6,11.

The meaning of Choosing the Lowest Seat⁷⁰, which on the surface is absurd (a recipe for hypocrisy)⁷¹, is therefore unobjectionable, for attempts to exalt oneself (cause oneself to rise) will fail (v. 11; Lk 18,14; Jas 4,6.10)⁷². According to the rule enunciated even for kings, one must not have one's heart (i. e. mind) lifted up: that way lies complacency. The Law is insensibly infringed. God, after all, sees into the mind (1 Sam 16,7). If one loves one's neighbour as oneself (Lev 19,18; Mk 12,31; Lk 10,27) one does not elevate oneself above one's brethren (even if one is a king). If therefore one chooses a position which by custom is "low" one obeys the commandment, since, the rabbis affirm, one must not put one's neighbour to shame⁷³, Yahweh will elevate one at the End of Days⁷⁴, as he invited selected persons "up" to dine at Ex 19,24; cf. 24, 1-2, 9-11. The idea is securely Lucan (Lk 16,10; 19,17). A worldly idea once again supplies a spiritual precept.

The historical proofs that he who belongs in a low seat may be called up to a high position may be listed: Joseph (Ps 105,17-22); Gideon (Jdg 6,15-16); Saul (1 Sam 9,22) (e;qeto...to,pon evn prw,toij tw/n keklhme,nwn); David (1 Sam 16,5-13 (note the comical 1 Sam 17,28) and compare Ps 78,70-71 with Ps 89,28(27); Ps 151 (LXX) and *Lib. Ant. Bibl.* 59,4; 62,5)⁷⁵. The promotion of Benjamin at Gen 43,3 did not require him, or his seniors, to shift from their places, an anomaly?

To satisfy ourselves that we have the clue to vv. 1-6 in the idea of inflation we must pass lightly through the rest of the chapter up to v.24. vv. 7-11 are negative advice; vv. 12-14 are positive advice; while vv. 15-24 illustrate the

⁷⁰ As Demeter did: *Homeric Hymns II: To Demeter* 192-204.

⁷¹ The character Uriah Heep created by C. DICKENS in *David Copperfield*. Note the behaviour castigated at Plutarch, *Galba* 20.3, contrasted with that at TERENCE, *Andr.* I. i. 37-38 (64-65); TACITUS, *Agr.* 6. Bab. Talm., *Ber.* 6b. Note Śānti-deva, *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 10.30: "May the lowly gain high status, but remain free from pride".

⁷² The usual comment is inappropriate (MARSHALL, *Luke* 582). Note the famous saying of Hillel: "My abasement is my exaltation, my self-exaltation is my abasement" (Midrash R., Lev. 1.5, Soncino trans. 9; Midrash R., Exod. XLV. 5, Soncino trans. 422). The model was Ps 113,5-6!

⁷³ Sifra Lev. 19,17. Bab. Talm., *B. M.* 58b-59a (Soncino trans. 349-350). MAIMONIDES, *Mishneh Torah* I. ii. 6,8 (trans. M. Hyamson [Jerusalem 1965] 55b); *Id.*, *Book of the Commandments*, negative commandment 251,303 (trans. C. B. Chavel, *The Commandments* [London and New York 1967] II. 239,281).

⁷⁴ M. Dibelius and Jeremias (where cited) were clear that the passage is an eschatological warning against worldly habits.

⁷⁵ Known to Polus (Poole), Gill, Price, M. Henry, and Scott.

^{75A} Midrash Tehillim 5.4 at M. DALY-DALTON, *David in the Fourth Gospel* (Leiden 2000) 249.

principles previously adumbrated. Each section adds to and explains what went before.

IV. LK 14,12-14. WHOM TO INVITE

Vv. 12-14, too, seem irrational. When preparing a meal not confined to the family, one must (a) not call friends, brothers, relatives (who figure again at v.26), nor rich neighbours, lest these reciprocate the invitation (why should they not?), and you receive some return. In other words you have, paradoxically, wasted an opportunity. When you open your doors for a festivity, invite the beggars and physically handicapped people -for beggars may be physically sound, and the handicapped may not be poor. Vague pagan parallels for such eccentric behaviour exist⁷⁶. No doubt the poor are, in general, not so placed as to make a calculable return⁷⁷, but they can indirectly increase your reputation (cf. Lk 16,4)⁷⁸, and God will reward you⁷⁹ at the Resurrection. That is why Asian beggars do not say "Thank you". Why not invite relatives? The semitic style (where a negative often indicates preference)⁸⁰ deceives us: when an entertainment is offered in which a meal figures, one should not exclude Beggars, etc., and should not close the guest list with the names of people of one's own social standing. Jesus does not mean no brother or rich neighbour is to be invited⁸¹, but, at the risk of courting their refusals, one should indeed make a true doch,⁸² which means that

⁷⁶ Lucian cited by BRAUN, *o. c.*, 60-61.

⁷⁷ Cf. BRAUN, *o. c.*, 96.

⁷⁸ There is a covert joke in οὐκ εἰς ἀδελφούς καὶ συγγενεὶς καὶ πλούσιους γειτόνους ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ εὐλογήσονται for even their blessings add up to an enhancement of the host's position, though differently from ordinary status-reinforcement. J. E. STAMBAUGH at D. L. BALCH, *The New Testament in its Social Environment* (Philadelphia 1986) 64.

⁷⁹ Midrash Rabbah, Leviticus XXXIV. 2,9 (Soncino trans., 427, 436).

⁸⁰ Οὐκ / μή... ἀλλὰ, as at Mt 9,13; Lk 10,20; Jn 7,16; 12,44; Acts 5,4c; 1 Cor 15,10 may be "non solum... sed etiam (Mt 18,22) or non tam...quam" (Mk 9,37b; Mt 10,20; 15,24), the context deciding. Cf. *Prayer of Manasseh* 8. The matter is discussed fully at W. F. Moulton's edn. of G. B. Winer's, *Treatise on the Grammar of the New Testament* (Edinburgh 1882) pt. III, sect. 55 § 8 (a) and (b), pp. 620-623 with references to controversial literature. F. BLASS-A. DEBRUNNER-R. W. FUNK, *Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (Cambridge and Chicago 1961) 233 col. I, § 448 (1).

⁸¹ See last note.

⁸² Gen 21,8; 26,30; Dan 5,1 (doch, = dei/pnon); Lk 5,29.

people of many classes are admitted. As things are (as we see from Lk 14,23 “compel”) this is not to be taken for granted (LXX Is 58,7 ei;sage) for beggars will be reluctant⁸³ to eat with the fine company instead of taking scraps at the back door. Meanwhile condescension and patronage can be swallowed up in humility: quite a different outlook from that reflected at Job 30,1.

The mixture of guests can be said to be required by scripture. Those who have property must not “hide themselves from their own flesh” (see Is 58,7 below: LXX ptwcou.j avste,gouj). Luke would not ask whether Syrian flesh is “own flesh”⁸⁴ with Jews’, or rather the flesh of asses (Ezk 23,20), for he has given us the Good Samaritan whose dealing with “flesh” is demonstrated. Those who would ignore such a precept are the “puffed up”, whose hearts are lifted up in the midst of their brethren, and do what one should not do, despise people (Mishnah, *Avôt* IV.3). Those who compete for the best seats will not invite beggars who, as Braun depicts⁸⁵, cannot enhance their social status. Public dinners, conspicuous consumption, demonstrate who are leading citizens⁸⁶.

Will not one who opens his dining hall to all, with a preference for those unable to offer anything in return, soon lose status? Even as a reputed “benefactor”, will he not disgust his well-to-do neighbours? India once codified the position. If a high-caste Hindu entertained a number of guests and failed to invite his neighbour and next neighbour-but-one, being in good standing, he was not only guilty of a criminal offence but also liable to pay damages to those whom he had overlooked⁸⁷. It is otherwise in God’s eyes, for beggars and unfortunates, his dependants, are in a sense his creditors. If one feeds

⁸³ Cf. BRAUN, *o. c.*, 95-96.

⁸⁴ Gen 29,14; Jdg 9,2; Neh 5,5. Midrash Rabbah, Exodus XXXIV.14 (Soncino trans. 440-442). BRAUN, *o. c.*, 84-89: none of the beggars, etc., need be Jews.

⁸⁵ BRAUN, *o. c.*, 55-57.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 104-106.

⁸⁷ Kautilya Arthaśāstra 3.20,14 (trans. R. P. Kangle, *The Kautilya Arthaśāstra Part II* [Bombay 1963] 292; cf. *Id.*, *Part III* (*Ibid.*, 1965) 230. Manu VIII. 392-393 with Bhārucci’s commentary (trans. Derrett, 1975, II. 205); trans. Doniger-Smith, 194; Bühler 322 (see n. 49 above). Vishnu-smṛti V.94; Yājñavalkya-smṛti II. 263. A British-Indian court refused to enforce the rule on the ground it was not within the listed topics on which Hindu Law should be applied; the plaintiff must try a suit for damages on the ground of defamation. According to LUCIAN, *Symp.* 22 (L. C. L., *Lucian* I. 434-436) Hetoemocles was cross because Aristaenetus failed to invite him (an instructive passage: BRAUN, *o. c.*, 115).

them one is God's steward. The Book of Job suggests as much⁸⁸. Apart from divine recompense, he who can afford to entertain the poor, and receive their blessings (Job 29,13) stands in less need of holding ceremonial dinners. The custom of sending portions (see below), and looking after the poor at Passover⁸⁹, has a general application, with secular as well as spiritual implications.

V. LK 14,15-24. THE GREAT SUPPER⁹⁰

The funny story, of which several versions exist (cf. Mt 22,1-14; Gosp. Thom. 64), concludes the topic of being "puffed up". The host was conscious of this factor, but was acting conventionally inviting folk who did have the means of reciprocating at least formally. Their refusals when the time came could be checked. Braun rightly sees the society as close, in which gossip would be rife, and secrets few⁹¹. That the dinner was practically ready must have been known even before it was announced, and the host's motives for holding it were not obscure. Since the guests would somehow have to reciprocate, they could weigh up what would be the advantage of attendance. If they excused themselves reciprocation would be less urgent. If they excused themselves for a verifiable and acceptable reason portions could be sent to them (v. 24)⁹².

Now the excuses sent (Luke gives the situation 'viva voce')⁹³ must be calibrated against the biblical excuses from turning up for military service, which we must visualise as a sort of feudal obligation. This has been ridiculed by Braun⁹⁴, but the wording shows we cannot avoid that parallel. According to Dt 20,5-7 the following must be sent back from the muster (obviously if they pleaded their excuse).

He who has built a new house, etc. A property consideration.

⁸⁸ Job 22,7; 29,16; 31,18-21. See also Ps 41,1; Prov 14,21; 19,17; 22,9; 28,27; 31,20. God regards the rich no more highly than the poor: Job 34,19.

⁸⁹ Mishnah, *Pes. X. 1* For sending portions see n. 92 below.

⁹⁰ J. D. M. DERRETT, *Law in the New Testament* (London 1970) ch. 6.

⁹¹ BRAUN, *o. c.*, 111 n. 38, 112 n. 40.

⁹² Neh 8,10,12; Est 9,19.22 (*mānôt*, meri,dej). G. FRIEDLANDER, *Laws and Customs of Israel* (London 1921) 399-401 (see n. 104 below).

⁹³ Unlike Mt 22,4-6 but like Gosp. Thom., where "oratio recta" is used.

⁹⁴ BRAUN, *o. c.*, 80 n.51 (in agreement with FITZMYER, *Luke II*, 1056) 107.

He who has planted a new vineyard, but not yet used the fruit. Another property consideration.

He who has betrothed a wife and not consummated the marriage. This too was regarded as a property consideration⁹⁵.

He who is fearful and faint-hearted -presumably expecting the other side to win.

The four standard “excusers” may not give themselves whole-heartedly to the fight which God commends. God has regarded them as excusably distracted, and the whole was a paradigm for attendance to public duties. Excuse no. 3 recurs in a slightly different form at Dt 24,5 (see Mishnah, *Sôṭāh* VIII. 2-4):

When a man takes a new wife he shall not go out in the army, neither shall he be charged with any business⁹⁶. He shall be free (Tg. Neof. “enjoy free time”) at home one year and shall cheer his wife whom he has taken.

This tends to avoid matrimonial disputes tending towards divorce; he must protect this wife (a virtual stranger) from his own mother; and he must see her into and through her first pregnancy. This form of the exemption is literally applicable to our parable, and, moreover, explains why this guest does not urge, “please hold me excused” as the others did. He regards his excuse as not merely legitimate but also mandatory.

But the new wife could have found her way to the ladies’ party in an inner room. The guest who had bought a field and not yet seen it (a capitalist) can inspect it by deputy or put off his visit for one day; the second who had bought five yoke of oxen (a rich agriculturalist) could hardly test any of them without the aid of servants. It is of the essence of the biblical excuses, as the Mishnah shows, that they are strictly construed: for each is an attempt to evade God’s will. God’s priests would check the excuses and distinguish between him who is “fearful” and him who is disloyal. The men’s excuses here match the excuses from ordinary military service, but if we take them

⁹⁵ BRAUN, *o. c.*, 76-80 and 80 n. 49.

⁹⁶ The Hebrew text and the LXX agree he is free from all demands (*ḥōl dāvār*). This is the view of Targ. Onqelos; Mishna, *Sôṭāh* VIII.4 (P. BLACKMAN, *Mishnayoth* III [London 1953] 370-371), Bab. Talm., *Sôṭāh* 44a (Soncino trans. 222); MAIMONIDES, *Mishneh Torah* XIV. v. 7, 10-11 (trans. Hershman, 226). But the opposite view, that he is exempt only from military, including auxiliary military, and, at most, public duties, is found in Sifre Dt §271, the Vulgate, Nachmanides and into modern commentators. Needless to say the State of Israel allows no exemptions in principle. The Targ. Neof. is probably right.

allegorically we find they relate to ephemeral property considerations ranked before social duties. The Qumran War Scroll makes it plain that only those should fight who are volunteers for war⁹⁷, perfect in spirit and body⁹⁸. Here the good will was wanting. Their behaviour is malicious rather than puerile⁹⁹. Their excuses are bogus. Although they differ in order and style in the three versions of the parable¹⁰⁰, they are heavy with irony: for the guests hasten to enjoy what God has given them, what he can easily withdraw because of Israel's sins: nothing was more speculative than trade (Matthew, Thomas). No wonder the host was angry (Num 14,23; Dt 1,35; Ps 95,11)¹⁰¹; and sends no portions (vv. 21,24).

Why did these men send bogus excuses *avpo. mia/j*¹⁰²? Intuitively and unanimously they rank him below themselves. They are "puffed up", their politeness transparent. They have closed ranks against him (Braun, 110 n. 36). They think his star is setting. 1 Kgs 1,49 (the guests of Adonijah) is a paradigm. His barometer is falling. "Being puffed up" has operated inauspiciously. The guests too suffer: they consulted their ambitions but find themselves disdained. The host rescues his esteem. Like the Steward in the parable of the Unjust Steward and like the Unjust Judge he finds himself Torah-abiding by accident.

The host, who is not a proxy for God¹⁰³, acts as if Isaiah 58,6-8 were his charter. We may use the Jewish Publication Society's version (Tanakh, 1985):

⁶No, this is the fast I desire:
to unlock the fetters of wickedness,

⁹⁷ *vanšēy nidbat milh* □ *āmā. nidāvā* is "voluntariness, freewill": Num 15,3; Dt 23,24; Ps 110,3; Hos 14,15.

⁹⁸ 1QM (= 1Q 33) VII. 5.

⁹⁹ BRAUN, *o. c.*, 108. One could refuse without sending an excuse: PLUTARCH, *Mor.* 502D (BRAUN, *o. c.*, 109 n. 33).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 68-70.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 71, illuminates such irritation from XENOPHON, *Symp.* 1.7; PLUTARCH, *Mor.* 511D-E; PLINY, *Letters* I.15 (L. C. L., PLINY, *Letters* I. 52-53, a humorous passage). Offended honour: BRAUN, *o. c.*, 114 n. 47 citing (?) ARISTOTLE, *Rhet.* 2.2.1,3,5 (1378a-b).

¹⁰² Doubt as to the missing noun (*avrch/j*, etc.?) should be resolved in favour of *o`rmh/j* ("from a single impulse", cf. Marcus Aurelius Antoninus IV. 40). It was no conspiracy: small minds thought alike, and the host understood them. Black's observations are of interest: *Aramaic Approach*, 113.

¹⁰³ Rightly, DE MEEÛS, *o. c.*, 870 deciding with M. HERMANIUK, *La parabole évangélique* (Bruges 1947) 225, cf. 246, and against D. BUZY, *Les paraboles* (Paris 1932) 300.

And untie the cords of the yoke
To let the oppressed go free;
To break off every yoke.

⁷It is to share your bread with the hungry,
And to take the wretched poor (or cast-out) into your home;
When you see the naked to clothe him,
And not to ignore your own kin (lit. hide from your own flesh).

That the poor and neglected must be taken into one's own home (house) is insisted upon. The rabbis say that when he feeds the hungry the charitable man must feed them from the best on his own table¹⁰⁴. And so the host does (v.23c): he goes beyond the pattern of Wisdom with her patronising invitations at Prov 9,1-6¹⁰⁵.

⁸Then shall your light burst through like the dawn and
Your healing spring up quickly;
Your Vindicator shall march before you,
The presence of the Lord shall be your rear-guard.

The host will be like a watered garden, like a spring whose waters do not fail (Is 58,11): there will be no failure of irrigation in his case. Any part of the Songs of the Servant is relevant to the Messianic Age.

No one who ignores the use of the Old Testament to illustrate the New can understand why our host sends for the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame, and afterwards for any that can be found, perhaps homeless, on the highways and along the hedgerows, whether temporarily or even permanently. The guess that the first refer to Jewish Christians the second to converted Gentiles is of very great age but is not quite close enough to our parable as the source of inspiration. The attitude of Jewish society to handicapped people is consecrated in holy scripture¹⁰⁶. A list such as "lame, blind, paralyzed, deaf and dumb" fits two groups of people. According to Matthew¹⁰⁷ people such as these were healed by Jesus out of compassion immediately before the Feeding of the Four Thousand -and indeed many

¹⁰⁴ G. Friedlander (n. 92) 65 §23. Friedlander's work is a summary of Abraham Danziger's *Hayye Adam* and Solomon Ganzfried's *Qisûr Šulhân `Arûk*.

¹⁰⁵ Is 58,7 is illuminated by rabbis at Pal. Targ., *Peâ* 4,19a,22 (STRACK-BILLERBECK, o. c., I. 524) and Midrash Rabbah, Leviticus XXXIV. 4 (Soncino trans., 430, 432-3, 436-437) (STRACK-BILLERBECK, o. c., I. 821); and Midrash Rabbah, Exodus XXXI.11-14 (Soncino trans., 390-396) (STRACK-BILLERBECK, o. c., I. 822).

¹⁰⁶ See the Qumran references below.

¹⁰⁷ Mt 15,30-31.

cures took place before the Feeding of the Five Thousand (Mt 14,14; Lk 9,11), when Jesus was concerned they should be fed as an army. If it is true that Jesus actually saw them as potential priests¹⁰⁸, the removal of their disabilities would be relevant and mandatory (cf. Lev 21,16-23). Light is thrown by the second group, identical in appearance, who were unhappily to be excluded from (a) the assembly of the community associated with Qumran¹⁰⁹, and (b) from the army prepared for war¹¹⁰. So we are recalled to fitness for inclusion at the muster, when many are called but few chosen, while the poor are entitled to the Kingdom of God (Lk 6,20)¹¹¹.

The handicapped were excluded from Israel in view of the coming conflict: the poor, the crippled, etc., of Lk 14,21 are socially excluded within the town, as is obvious from Lk 14,13, and the folk found by the highways and hedgerows of Lk 14,23 are excluded, so to speak, even from the town itself. There is no allusion to gentiles¹¹². But the host's house must be full (cf. Jn 14,2). Luke's own failure to reproduce material about the Four Thousand is compensated for by this parable. The lame and blind (whom David would even have excluded from Jerusalem: 2 Sam 5,8) whilst not cured, do not have to make excuses for non-participation in the war that is pending, while the guests that did send their excuses were their opposites -and their excuses were bogus. The host, in effect, reunites Israel and once again a meal serves as a metaphor for social realities (cf. Lk 7,33-35; Mt 15,26-27)¹¹³.

VI. AN IDEAL JEWISH SERMON

¹⁰⁸ The highly original article of F. DE STEFANO-L. SFERCO, "Una rilettura del Miracolo della moltiplicazione dei pani": *Bibbia e Oriente* 41/2, n. 200 (1999) 65-75. Ignore the allegations regarding impurity, on which see correct information in B. J. KOET, "Purity and impurity of the body in Luke-Acts", in: M. J. H. M. POORTHUIS-J. SCHWARTZ (eds.) *Purity and Holiness. The Heritage of Leviticus* (Leiden 2000) 93-106.

¹⁰⁹ 1QSa (= 1Q28a) II. 5-8.

¹¹⁰ 1QM (= 1Q33) VII. 4-6.

¹¹¹ There is no question of one being able to enter the Kingdom without scrutiny. DE MEEÛS, o. c., 870 rightly contradicts C. H. DODD, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, rev. edn. (London & Glasgow 1961) 91.

¹¹² DODD, o. c., 91; BRAUN, o. c., 9. De MeeÛs records hesitation: o. c., 851-852.

¹¹³ F. DE STEFANO-L. SFERCO, o. c., 71, 73.

Jesus lectures the host, and the hearers need to know what his authority was. The Jewish traditional outlook must be borne in mind: R. Simeon b. Yohai (AD 100-170) said, "If three have eaten at one table and have not spoken there words of the Law, it is as though they had eaten of the sacrifices of the dead (Ps 106,28), for it is written, 'For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, without God' (Is 28,8) (Is 28 attacks drunkards who will not learn). But if three have eaten at one table and have spoken over it words of the Law, it is as if they had eaten from the table of God, for it is written, 'And he said unto me, "This is the table that is before the Lord" (Ezk 41,22)"¹¹⁴.

Luke is well acquainted with Jewish ideas and has a distinct view of Jesus's teaching within them¹¹⁵. A perfect sermon contains references to the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. Despite Braun's and De Meeûs's neglect, we can make a rapid check of the sources which figure in all three sections after Lk 14,2-6 had introduced the living allegory of being "puffed up": granted that, for a *p^etih□â*, Prov 25,6-7 would suffice.

In Lk 14,7-11 the Law is represented by Dt 17,19-20. The Pentateuch, Judges and 1 Samuel provide Joseph, also Gideon, Saul, and David. For the Prophets see Is 2,11-12.17; 23,9; Ezk 17,24; Dan 4,37c. For the Writings see Ps 113,6-8; Prov 13,10; 25,6-7. And see Am 7,14.

In Lk 14,12-14 the Law is again Dt 17,19-20; the Prophets are represented by Is 58,7; and the Writings by Ps 41,1; Prov 9,1-6; 11,24; 19,17; 22,9.

Lk 14,15-24 illustrates earlier material. The Law would provide Num 14,23; Dt 1,35; Dt 20,5-7; 24,5; the Prophets Is 58,7; Zeph 1,7; the Writings Ps 95,11; Prov 11,2. At the end of the meal the host has, in biblical terminology "scattered", and reaps the reward¹¹⁶: Prov 11,24 (PZR); Ps 112:9 (2 Cor 9,9).

Hence Lk 14 is a set of perfect Jewish sermons, even if we leave alone v. 26, which is based on Ex 21,5-6; Dt 15,16¹¹⁷ and vv. 28-32 which allude, amongst many other passages, to Gen 11,1-10; Ps 127,1; Prov 24,3-6; Eccl 9,11; and Is 28,16¹¹⁸.

¹¹⁴ Mishnah, *vAvôt* III.3.

¹¹⁵ The parable of the Unjust Steward proves it. J. D. M. DERRETT, *Law, o. c.*, ch. 1. See also KOET, "Purity" (n.108 above): Luke is *au courant* with Jewish prejudices.

¹¹⁶ Promiscuity of charity is not objected to: for Ps 112,9 see the amusing story at Midrash Rabbah, Leviticus XXXIV.16 (Soncino trans., 444).

¹¹⁷ DERRETT, "Hating" (n. 1 above).

¹¹⁸ Derrett cited at n. 2 above.

C. F. Evans' apparently absurd theory¹¹⁹; that Luke's Central Section is founded upon, spun around, or otherwise conceived as a development of Dt 1 to 26, is treated seriously by J. A. Sanders, R. W. Wall, J. Drury, H. L. Egelkraut and G. W. Buchanan, but scouted by C. L. Blomberg, J. W. Wenham and others. The coincidences multiply as the Old Testament background to Luke is progressively unwound. What of our present story? Evans places Lk 14,1-14 against Dt 17,8-18,22. True enough, Dt 17,8ff deals with obedience and judgment. Dt 17, 14-20 deals with inflation of kings and Dt 18,1-8 deals with portions for ministering (ŠRT) priests and levites, and Dt 18,15-22 is about the coming prophet. Evans places Lk 14,15-35 against Dt 20. True enough, Dt 20,5-7 lists the excuses valid to exempt the unwilling from the warfare of the world. *Viderint quorum interest*.

VII. CONCLUSION

"Humility", a word covering several psychological positions, is a standard theme in the Old Testament and in rabbinic texts -it reappears tediously. As is notorious, it plays no such part in Greek or Roman thought¹²⁰. The idea of "being puffed up" is equally objectionable, though for different reasons, in Jewish and Greek diction (Heb. G'H, *gā ʔwā, gā ʔōn*; Gk. *fusio,w*). A passage recommending humility is more likely to have a Jewish than a pagan background. Sections of the supper discourse had a biblical dossier behind them, though handled by an original mind. Luke's knowledge of Greek rhetorical technique may have helped him, but who knows how far? Pagan ideas could never have made it rational to seek the lowest seat.

Luke alludes to the possibility that the greatest host of all will promote the soul under the appellation "friend", a possibility more remote if she has placed herself in too prominent a position already. The source is Prov 25,6-7. There are allusions to pentateuchal and prophetic scenes of elevation from a lowly to the highest position. Saul's case is peculiarly interesting. One would be foolish to overlook the fact that Saul, in his unexpected elevation (1 Sam

¹¹⁹ See n. 12 above. At BRAUN, *o. c.*, 180 n. 6 disparages Moessner's interest in Evans' theory (D. P. MOESSNER, *The Lord of the Banquet* [Minneapolis 1989]). Evans' theory is half a century old. He did not repudiate it in his *Saint Luke* (London & Philadelphia 1990). That Luke intended his work as a lectionary facility is another theory which has few supporters but has never been disproved.

¹²⁰ W. GRUNDMANN, *tapeino,j*, *T.W.N.T.* VIII (1969) 1-27, esp. 1-6. BRAUN, *o. c.*, 49-52: "a call to stay within the limits of one's social position".

9,21; 15,17 *qāt □□on jatā b° (ēyneykā)* is accompanied by the anonymous servant (1 Sam 9,5-10.22- he is missing at the anointing), with whom the reader can identify himself. He is quite superfluous to the story, except to show that Saul, the “low man in his own eyes”, and his servant beside him could equally be installed by God’s agent, Samuel, in the highest place amongst thirty (the LXX says sixty) special guests (*haq°rû jîm, tw/n keklhme,nwn*). The “boy” does not share Saul’s eventual shame, and need have nothing to do with his fall. The story is about responding to invitations. God may invite the mighty and the humble through his agents, as at 1 Sam 9,13.24 (*hā (ām qārā tî)*). The Lord’s feast is in preparation, the final invitation about to be despatched, before he comes to inspect his guests (Zeph 1,7; Mt 22,11). Those who are out of sympathy with him (cf. Lk 14,18-20) have no sooner arrived than they squabble, in their worldly way, about their placing in the hall. The squabblers are without exception “puffed up”, which even kings and their families must not be.

The host can sort them out, and his allocation of honour may not accord with theirs, for he knows, what they do not, the qualifications of each relative to the others. Worldly estimates of relative merit are fallible -and that applies to every Sabbath meal which Jesus’s contemporaries can imagine for themselves. The chapter is not about wealth and poverty, nor is the host of the Great Supper converted, as Braun imagined¹²¹, but it is about conceit and its punishment. That host’s eyes are unexpectedly opened. There is no need to imagine his ties with his neighbours are cut: he still has money, and they can revise their estimates of him¹²². The chapter itself is about “humility” and to that extent de Meeûs was right¹²³.

Resumen.- El precepto de elegir el puesto más bajo se basa en Prov 25,6-7; pero se encuentra en un capítulo dedicado a las consecuencias de ser “inflado”, donde personas complacientes descuidan los mandamientos de Dios, que incluye hospitalidad indiscriminadamente (Is 58,6-8) con la postura social que lo implica. Es preferible para examinar cada sección de Lc 14, desde el hombre hidrópico hasta la gran Cena. La autoridad de la Torah es Dt 17,19-20. Lucas no sólo sabía esto, sino que proveyó una disertación sobre él.

Summary.- *The precept to choose the lowest seat is (as is known) based on Prov 25,6-7; but it is set in a chapter devoted to the consequences of being “puffed up”, whereby complacent*

¹²¹ BRAUN, o. c., 3,97, ch. 6, esp. 121, 126, 174.

¹²² Cf. BRAUN, o. c., 120, 122.

¹²³ DE MEEÛS, o. c., cited at n. 10 above.

persons neglect God's commands, which include indiscriminate hospitality (Is 58,6-8) with the social posture that implies. It is desirable to examine each section of Lk 14, from the dropsical man to the Great Supper. The Torah authority is Dt 17,19-20. Luke not only knew this but provides a dissertation on it.