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'Aesop', 'Q' and 'Luke'

STEVE REECE
Department of Classics, Saint Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota, USA 55057.
Email: reece@stolaf.edu

The last chapter of the gospel of Luke includes a story of the risen Christ meeting two of his disciples on their way from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus and chastising them with the poetic expression ὦ ἀνόητοι καὶ βραδεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ 'O foolish ones, and slow in heart' (Luke 24.25). No commentator has ever observed that Jesus' expression occurs verbatim, in the same iambic trimeter metre, in two poetic versions of animal fables attributed to the famous Greek fabulist Aesop. It is plausible that Luke is here, as at least twice elsewhere in his gospel, tapping into the rich tradition of Aesopic fables and proverbs that were widely known throughout the Mediterranean world in the first century CE.

Keywords: Luke 24.25, fable, Aesop, ancient education, Byzantine dodecasyllable

1. Luke 24.25: 'O foolish ones, and slow in heart'

In an account unique to the gospel of Luke the crucified and risen Christ is described joining two disciples on their way from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus, appearing bewildered by their failure to recognise the significance of the events of the past few days, and chastising them for not comprehending the full meaning of the ancient prophecies (Luke 24.25–7):

> (25) Καὶ αὐτὸς εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς, ὦ ἀνόητοι καὶ βραδεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ τοῦ πιστεύειν ἐπὶ πᾶσιν οἷς ἐλάλησαν οἱ προφῆται· (26) οὐχὶ ταῦτα ἔδει παθεῖν τὸν Χριστὸν καὶ εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ; (27) καὶ ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ Μωϋσέως καὶ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν προφητῶν διερμήνευσεν αὐτοῖς ἐν πάσαις ταῖς γραφαῖς τὰ περὶ ἑαυτοῦ.
>
> (25) And he said to them, 'O foolish ones, and slow in heart to believe in all the things that the prophets spoke. (26) Was it not necessary that the Christ suffer these things and come into his glory?' (27) And beginning from Moses and all the prophets he explained to them the matters concerning himself in all the scriptures.

So far as I am aware no commentator has ever observed that Jesus' expression ὦ ἀνόητοι καὶ βραδεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ 'O foolish ones, and slow in heart' occurs

verbatim in two versions of animal fables attributed to the famous Greek slave, scapegoat and story-teller Aesop. In 'The Fox and the Goat in the Well' a fox uses precisely these words to chastise a goat for jumping into a well for a drink without making any provision for how he will get back out. In 'The Frogs at the Wedding of the Sun' a wiser than average frog uses precisely these words to chastise his companions for celebrating the wedding of the sun, since, he predicts, if the sun were to produce any offspring, it would become too hot and dry for the frogs to survive. That commentators have neglected to note these parallels is understandable: the versions of the fables that include the verbatim expression have survived in only two manuscripts, the fourteenth/fifteenth-century Codex Vaticanus graecus 777 and the early fifteenth-century Codex Parisinus graecus 2991 A, and they have been published only as variants in E. Chambry's 1925 Budé edition of Aesop and in an appendix to O. Crusius' 1897 Teubner edition of Babrius.

The hundreds of fables attributed to Aesop that survive to this day have come down to us from many places and periods. We find Aesopic fables embedded in the texts of some of the earliest Greek poets, such as Hesiod, Archilochus, Semonides, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Aristophanes, as well as in the narratives of Classical prose writers, such as Herodotus, Xenophon Plato, and Aristotle. The fourth/third-century BCE Athenian orator Demetrius of Phalerum was apparently the first to gather a collection of Aesopic fables in prose form, and though his work did not survive the medieval period his collection was probably the source for the first-century CE Latin poet Phaedrus, who produced five books of Aesopic fables in a Latin iambic metre called the *senarius*, and for the first/second-century CE Greek poet Babrius, who produced two books of Aesopic fables in an offshoot of the Greek iambic metre called the choliambic. Aesopic fables continued to be referenced in Greek literature of the Hellenistic and Roman periods, both in poetry, such as in the poems from various periods that comprise the *Greek Anthology*, and in prose, such as in the works of Diodorus Siculus, Plutarch, Lucian, Achilles Tatius and Athenaeus. Aesopic fables and proverbs became a regular feature of school exercises for the primary and secondary educational levels during the Hellenistic and Roman periods (cf. the rhetorician Quintilian's advice for students in his *Institutio oratoria* 1.9.1–3), and records of these school exercises have survived on papyrus sheets and wax tablets. Aesopic fables continued to be copied and recopied, translated, reshaped into various metrical forms, adapted to new contexts, and weighed down with moralising introductions (promythia) and summaries (epimythia) throughout the medieval period, and these types of adaptions have continued even to this day. Great care needs to be taken, then, when attributing an Aesopic fable, or a specific verse or phrase of a fable, to a particular place of origin or period of time. One ramification of this complicated situation for our consideration of the expression attributed to Jesus in Luke 24.25 is that we must entertain various possible

directions of influence: 'Luke' is drawing from 'Aesop', 'Aesop' is drawing from 'Luke', or both are drawing from a common source.[1]

The popular Aesopic fable of how a fox trapped in a well tricks a goat into jumping in to facilitate her escape occurs in several slightly different prose versions attested in a few dozen manuscripts (see Halm 45, Chambry 40, Perry 9, Hausrath 9).[2] If further proof of the fable's antiquity were needed, the fact that it occurs in Latin translation already in the early first century CE (Phaedrus 4.9) serves to remove all doubt.[3] The fable probably originated in the Classical period, perhaps even as early as the Archaic period.[4] In the most common version of the fable the fox uses the goat as a step-ladder and, having escaped from the well, taunts the trapped goat by saying something like: 'Hey you (ὦ οὗτος), if only you had as many wits as you have hairs in your beard, you would have thought about how you were going to get out of the well before jumping in.' In a shorter prose version of the fable that survives in two

1 For an exhaustive collection of Aesopic fables embedded in Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic Greek literature, see G.-J. van Dijk, *AINOI, ΛΟΓΟΙ, ΜΥΘΟΙ: Fables in Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic Greek Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1997) and F. R. Adrados, *History of the Graeco-Latin Fable*, vol. I: *Introduction and From the Origins to the Hellenistic Age* (Leiden: Brill, 1999). For a reconstruction of the prose collection of Demetrius of Phalerum, see B. E. Perry, 'Demetrius of Phalerum and the Aesopic Fables', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 93 (1962) 287–346. For a survey of the transmission of Aesopica, including in Babrius and Phaedrus, see B. E. Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965) xi–cii. For a critical edition of Phaedrus, see A. Guaglianone, *Phaedri Augusti liberti liber fabularum* (Turin: Paravia, 1969). For a critical edition of Babrius, see M. J. Luzzatto and A. La Penna, *Babrii mythiambi Aesopei* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1986). For the state of the collection during the Byzantine and Medieval periods, see F. R. Adrados, *History of the Graeco-Latin Fable*, vol. II: *The Fable during the Roman Empire and in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2000). For a survey of the use of Aesop's fables in the Roman educational system, see B. F. Fisher, 'A History of the Use of Aesop's Fables as a School Text from the Classical Era through the Nineteenth Century' (Indiana University Dissertation, 1987). For some well-selected and annotated bibliography on all matters of Aesopica, see N. Holzberg, *The Ancient Fable* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

2 I refer to the following editions of Aesopica: K. Halm, *Fabulae Aesopicae collectae* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1852) (= Halm); E. Chambry, *Aesopi fabulae*, 2 vols. (Paris: Société d'Édition 'Les Belles Lettres', 1925–6) (= Chambry); B. E. Perry, *Aesopica* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1952) (= Perry); A. Hausrath, *Corpus fabularum Aesopicarum*, 2 fascicles (Leipzig: Teubner, 1959, 1970) (= Hausrath). For a recent English translation of 600 Aesopic fables, collected from various Greek and Latin sources and arranged topically, see L. Gibbs, *Aesop's Fables* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

3 O. Crusius, *Babrii fabulae Aesopeae* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1897) 165 includes a version of the fable in his collection of Babrius' choliambics (as number 182), but only two, possibly three, lines in its surviving form can be manipulated to scan as choliambics.

4 Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, I.437, places the origin of the fable back at least into the Classical period, based on its typically Classical three-part structure. He proposes that the fable may even be pre-Classical, based on its similarities to the archaic poet Archilochus (*Graeco-Latin Fable*, I.495).

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manuscripts, the fox introduces her taunt of the trapped goat by calling him a fool (using the same two introductory words that Luke places in the mouth of Jesus in his excoriation of his disciples on their way to Emmaus): 'O foolish one (ὦ ἀνόητε)'.[5] A metrical version of the fable poses a slightly different situation: a fox, while passing by a well, catches sight of a goat trapped within and taunts him from above. This version elaborates the fox's initial taunt a bit further to include the entire verse ὦ ἀνόητε καὶ βραδὺς τῇ καρδίᾳ 'O foolish one, and slow in heart', which, other than being in the singular rather than plural, is identical to Jesus' expression in the gospel of Luke. This metrical version, published in E. Chambry's 1925 edition (as fable 40 *aliter*), is preserved in Codex Vaticanus graecus 777 (labelled Mb in Chambry), a fourteenth- or fifteenth-century manuscript containing 244 fables in alphabetical order, many metrical, thirty or so in the choliambics of Babrius, and about fifty others, including this one, in a Byzantine dodecasyllabic verse form in which the old iambic metre has devolved into mere 'syllable counting'. This dodecasyllabic rendition of the fable is numbered 205 in this manuscript:

Τράγος δὲ πάλιν[6] διψήσας ἐν τῷ θέρει
κάτω κατῆλθε πιεῖν εἰς φρέαρ ὕδωρ.
Ὁ δὲ κορεσθεὶς ἀνελθεῖν οὐκ εὐπόρει,
ὃς μετενόει καὶ βοηθὸν ἐζήτει,
ὅπως ἀνέλθῃ ἐκ τοῦ βάθους ὁ τράγος. (5)
Ἡ δὲ ἀλώπηξ τοῦτον ἐκβλεψαμένη
ἐμειδίασε καὶ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐλάλει·
ὦ ἀνόητε καὶ βραδὺς[7] τῇ καρδίᾳ,
εἰ εἶχες φρένας ὡς ἐν πώγωνι τρίχας,
οὐκ ἂν κατῄεις, εἰ μὴ ἄνοδον οἶδας. (10)

Οὕτω τῶν ἀνθρώπων τοὺς φρονίμους δεῖ πρῶτον τὰ τέλη τῶν
πραγμάτων σκοπεῖν, εἶθ' οὕτως αὐτοῖς ἐπιχειρεῖν.

A goat, having again grown thirsty in the summer heat,
Climbed down into a well to drink some water.
Having quenched his thirst he could not find a way to climb out,
So the goat had a change of mind and began to seek some help,
So that he might climb out from the depths of the well.
But a fox, having caught sight of him,
Smiled and began to speak to him:
'O foolish one, and slow in heart,
If you had as many wits as hairs in your beard,
You would not have climbed down before figuring out a way back up.'

5 Cf. fable 134 in the fifteenth-century codex Bodleianus Auct. F. 4.7 (Ba) and fable 81 in the thirteenth-century codex Palatinus 367; printed in Halm 45b, Chambry 40 *aliter*, and Crusius 182 (as noted above Crusius includes this version in his collection of Babrius' choliambics).

6 πάλιν in MS, but Chambry prints πάλαι.

7 βραδὺς in MS, but Chambry prints βραδὺ.

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> Prudent people should consider the outcome of their actions before attempting them.[8]

An altogether different Aesopic fable, about frogs celebrating the wedding of the sun, also contains a verbatim expression of the phrase under consideration. This fable occurs in both prose and poetic versions. The fact that the fable occurs both in the Greek choliambics of the first–second century CE poet Babrius (24) and in the Latin iambic *senarii* of the early first-century CE poet Phaedrus (1.6) attests to its antiquity. In the prose version of the fable, which survives in two manuscripts (see Halm 77, Chambry 128), an exceptionally prudent frog points out to his companions that this wedding is not an occasion to rejoice, since, if the sun marries and has a son like himself, the increased heat will dry up their ponds all the more quickly. The frog chastises his companions with the words 'O fools, for what reason do you rejoice?' (ὦ μῶροι, εἰς τί ἀγάλλεσθε;). A dodecasyllabic version of the fable takes the frog's warning a bit further. This version is preserved only in Codex Vaticanus graecus 777 and is published only in E. Chambry's 1925 edition (as fable 128 *aliter*). This dodecasyllabic rendition of the fable is numbered 63 in this manuscript:

> Ἡλίῳ ποτὲ γάμος θέρους ὑπῆρχε.
> Οἱ δὲ βάτραχοι ἠγάλλοντο μεγάλως
> ἐπὶ τῇ λαμπρᾷ τραπέζῃ τοῦ Ἡλίου.
> Εἷς δὲ ἐξ αὐτῶν μέγα ἀναστενάξας
> ἀνακέκραγε καὶ πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἐβόα· (5)
> ὦ ἀνόητοι καὶ βραδεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ,
> εἰς τί βοᾶτε μεγάλα κεκραγότες
> ὡς ἐπ' ἀγαθῷ τινὶ προσδοκωμένῳ;
> Εἰ οὖν Ἥλιος μονώτατος ὑπάρχων

8 As mentioned above, a version of the fable with but a few verbal differences, and slightly shorter because it appears to be missing two verses, is recorded in Codex Parisinus graecus 2991 A, an early fifteenth-century codex that includes an appendix of several four-, five- and eight-line Aesopic fables in the tradition of Ignatius the Deacon's *tetrasticha iambica* – but rather more dodecasyllabic than truly iambic. These fables are edited by C. F. Müller and included at the end of a collection of iambic fables published by him in Crusius, *Babrii fabulae,* 249–96. Müller does not attribute the fable to anyone in particular, but he includes it in his collection of *tetrasticha iambica* that he considers later imitations of those of the ninth-century cleric and fabulist Ignatius the Deacon, who composed four-line (*tetrasticha*) Aesopic fables in iambic trimeters (*iambica*) – though ones influenced by the metrical conventions of the *politici* dodecasyllables (i.e. no resolution, accent on penultimate syllable). Müller prints two other *tetrasticha iambica* versions of the fable of the fox and goat (II 15 and II 31b) that do not include the line in question (ὦ ἀνόητε καὶ βραδὺς τῇ καρδίᾳ), and – what is pertinent for our purposes – he also prints a version (II 31a) that does include the line. This version is neither built upon a four-line structure (*tetrasticha*) nor composed in a proper iambic meter (*iambica*) but is rather, like the version of the fable in Codex Vaticanus graecus 777, in a stichic dodecasyllabic verse form.

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ὕλην ἅπασαν καὶ τὴν γῆν καταφλέγῃ, (10)
εἰ γήμας παῖδα ἀνθόμοιον ποιήσει,
τί μὴ πάθωμεν ἡμεῖς κακόν, εἰπέ μοι.

Ὅτι πολλοὶ τῶν τὸ φρόνημα κουφότερον ἐχόντων χαίρουσιν ἐπ' ἀδήλοις.

Once, during the summer, the sun held a wedding.
The frogs were greatly delighted
At the brilliant feast of the sun.
But one of them, letting out a great groan,
Lifted up his voice and shouted to them:
'O foolish ones, and slow in heart,
For what reason do you shout out with your loud croaking,
As though you were expecting something good?
If the sun, while all by himself,
Burns up all the woodland and the earth,
If he marries and has a son like himself,
Tell me what evil we will not suffer.'

Many people who have vain thoughts rejoice in unknown things.

Given the very close similarities among the expressions ὦ ἀνόητε/ἀνόητοι καὶ βραδὺς/βραδὺ/βραδεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ in the Aesopic fables and in the gospel of Luke, all with exactly the same vocabulary, arranged precisely in the same order, and poured into the same metre, we can conclude with some certainty that they did not arise in complete isolation from one another. Rather, we appear to be dealing here with a genetic relationship among these texts. This must be a case of 'Luke' quoting 'Aesop', 'Aesop' quoting 'Luke', or both quoting a common source.[9]

2. 'Christianisation' of the Aesopic Corpus

It is likely, and entirely reasonable, that the first inclination of most readers, when confronted with these circumstances, is to assume that a Byzantine poet (or poets) contrived to add a Christian flavour to these two ancient Aesopic tales by interpolating an expression from a well-known story in the gospel of Luke. The fact that the expression occurs only in the dodecasyllabic versions of the two fables, not in the choliambics of Babrius or (translated) in the iambic *senarii* of Phaedrus, or in the various Greek prose versions, points to this direction of influence. Aesopic fables reformulated as dodecasyllabic verses, such as the two fables under consideration here, are clearly a Byzantine innovation. This

9 More complicated, yet still genetic, relationships can be imagined, unlikely though they may seem: e.g. 'Luke' quoted an earlier Aesopic, or possibly non-Aesopic, iambic verse, and the dodecasyllabic 'Aesop' quoted 'Luke' without any awareness of the earlier iambic verse.

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syllable-counting verse form, sometimes called the *politici* (i.e. 'popular') dodecasyllables,[10] was an offspring of the ancient iambic trimeter via the choliambics of a Babrian type. But while the ancient iambics and choliambics were based on variations of syllabic quantity and pitch accent, the dodecasyllables were based on the dynamic rhythm of stress accent, and while the syllables of the ancient iambics and choliambics could be resolved (i.e. two short syllables could be substituted for a long syllable in some metrical positions), thereby allowing some variation in the number of syllables in each verse, the dodecasyllables entailed mere syllable counting, with a caesura separating the initial five syllables from the subsequent seven (or, sometimes, the reverse). Also, the dodecasyllables shared a feature of Babrian choliambics in accenting the penult of the final word of every verse. The dodecasyllabic verse form began to appear in the sixth or seventh century.[11] Thus the Byzantine poet(s) who refashioned the prose versions, or iambic trimeter or choliambic versions (cf. Babrius), of the two Aesopic fables certainly had the opportunity, and perhaps the motivation, to have interpolated a memorable expression from the gospel of Luke.

In fact, it is clearly demonstrable that words, phrases and, in at least one case, even entire stories from the Septuagint and New Testament have from time to time crept into the massive and ever-evolving corpus of Aesopic fables. Most notorious, albeit idiosyncratic, is a fable about the trees in search of a king, which appears as the 133rd fable in Codex Vaticanus graecus 777 (Chambry 253, Perry 262, Hausrath 293), the fourteenth- or fifteenth-century manuscript containing the 244 Aesopic fables in alphabetical order that we have referenced above. This entire fable is drawn wholesale, almost verbatim, from the Greek Septuagint (Judg 9.8–15).[12] A century or two earlier Odo of Cheriton, an early

10 One finds some discrepancies in the use of this term. The dodecasyllable was included among the στίχοι πολιτικοί 'political verses' by the Byzantines themselves, but today the term 'political verse' is used primarily of the fifteen-syllable verse form that became the most common metre of Byzantine and Modern Greek poetry: e.g. M. D. Lauxtermann, *The Spring of Rhythm: An Essay on the Political Verse and Other Byzantine Metres* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999) 21–40.

11 A more precise date for the origin of the dodecasyllable appears elusive, since it probably arose in an oral rather than written medium: Chambry, *Aesopi fabulae*, 28, suggests the fourth or fifth century; U. Ursing, *Studien zur griechischen Fabel* (Lund: H. Ohlsson, 1930) 13 concurs; Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable,* II.513 favours the sixth or seventh. Some fairly normal-looking dodecasyllables can be seen already in the poetry of Georgios of Pisidia (7th c.), who wrote poetry in a form evolutionarily between the ancient quantitative iambic trimeter and the Byzantine dodecasyllable. P. Maas, 'Der byzantinische Zwölfsilber', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 12 (1903) 278–323 is still the most thorough analysis of the development of the metre, as well as the foundation of modern study of Byzantine metrics generally; he projects the origin of the Byzantine dodecasyllable back to a century before Georgios of Pisidia, i.e. the sixth century.

12 A rendition of the fable also occurs in Josephus' *Antiquities* 5.236–8.

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thirteenth-century English cleric and fabulist, had translated this story from the Septuagint into Latin and placed it as the headpiece in his heavily Christianised collection of Aesopic fables in Latin prose.[13]

The moral addenda (epimythia) attached at various periods are naturally susceptible to interpolations from the Septuagint and New Testament. Passing through the Greek tradition since antiquity, for example, was an Aesopic fable about two roosters who fought for dominance over the hens: the victorious rooster flew to the rooftop to exult and was seized by an eagle; the defeated rooster retreated to an inconspicuous place and survived to mount the hens (Babrius 5, Aphthonius 12, 'Syntipas' 7). The fifteenth-century manuscript Trivultianus 775 (T), which contains only six Aesopic fables, attaches as an epimythium to this fable (Halm 21, Chambry 20, Hausrath 266) a quotation of the Septuagint Greek version of Prov 3.34 (quoted in Jas 4.6 and 1 Pet 5.5): ὁ μῦθος δηλοῖ ὅτι Κύριος ὑπερηφάνοις ἀντιτάσσεται, ταπεινοῖς δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν 'the fable shows that the Lord opposes the haughty but gives grace to the humble'.[14]

Apart from a few obvious quotations of the Septuagint and New Testament such as these, the footprint of Christianity on the Byzantine Greek tradition is relatively light: the form, the content and the language of the Greek fables, both in prose and poetic form, are thoroughly pagan, and it is remarkable how tenaciously they remained so even through centuries of Byzantine transmission. When Christianisation does occur, it always happens very late in the process, and it tends to be focused not on the bodies of the fables but on the epimythia, where Christian elements could be interpolated most easily without disrupting the integrity of the fables.

What does this mean for our consideration of the relationship between the expression ὦ ἀνόητε/ἀνόητοι καὶ βραδὺς/βραδὺ/βραδεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ 'O foolish one(s), and slow in heart' in the dodecasyllabic versions of the two Aesopic fables, 'The Fox and the Goat in the Well' and 'The Frogs at the Wedding of the Sun', and in the story of Jesus meeting two of his disciples on

13 Christian influence was much more pervasive in the medieval Latin tradition of Western Europe than in the Byzantine Greek traditions of Eastern Europe. Odo of Cheriton composed/adapted many Aesopic fables in Latin prose, setting them in a Christian context and adding Christian epimythia and even short sermons: e.g. 'The Heretic and the Fly' (Odo 12), 'The Cat who Made himself a Monk' (Odo 15), and 'The Fox who Confessed his Sins to the Rooster' (Odo 25). The numeration of Odo's fables here is based on the edition of L. Hervieux, *Les fabulistes latins depuis le siècle d'Auguste jusqu'à la fin du moyen âge*, vol. IV (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1896). English translations of Odo's fables are available in J. C. Jacobs, *The Fables of Odo of Cheriton* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1985).

14 Cf. the Aesopic fable 'The Bull, the Lioness and the Wild Boar' (Halm 395, Perry 414, Hausrath *sub* 'Syntipas' 11), the epimythium of which includes an almost verbatim version of Mark 4.24 (cf. Matt 7.2 and Luke 6.38): ὁ μῦθος δηλοῖ ὅτι ἐν ᾧ μέτρῳ μετρεῖ τις μετρηθήσεται αὐτῷ 'the fable shows that by whatever measure someone measures it will be measured out to him'.

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their way to Emmaus as recorded in the gospel of Luke? It means that what may have been quite reasonably our first inclination, i.e. to assume that the author(s) of the dodecasyllabic fables was interpolating a New Testament passage, has little to recommend it. Such an interpolation into the text of the body of a fable would be not just remarkable, not just unusual, but utterly unique in the entire Greek Aesopic tradition, even in the late adaptions by Byzantine Christians such as Ignatius the Deacon and 'Syntipas'. That a verbatim interpolation of a New Testament passage would have occurred twice, independently, in two different Aesopic tales is hardly imaginable.

3. 'Aesopification' of the Christian Corpus

Therefore, we should not dismiss out of hand the possibility that the expression in question did once exist, quite apart from the gospel of Luke, embedded in a prose or poetic version of an ancient Aesopic fable, or perhaps in a popular Classical or Hellenistic proverb or aphorism, and that it happened to survive only in these two late dodecasyllabic versions of the Aesopic tales. The extant Aesopic corpus is massive, but what has been lost would surely dwarf what has survived. Expressions in later versions of the fables, such as the one under consideration here, that do not happen to have parallels in the ancient Aesopic corpus, need not be regarded as innovations – or as interpolations from extra-Aesopic sources. These late versions may simply have been drawing from versions of fables that survived to their time but have not survived to ours.

Consequently, we should give serious consideration to the possibility that the direction of influence that we have assumed up to this point should be reversed. The author(s) of the dodecasyllabic fables did not draw the expression ὦ ἀνόητε/ἀνόητοι καὶ βραδὺς/βραδὺ/βραδεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ from the gospel of Luke. Rather, the gospel of Luke drew this expression from an ancient, i.e. pre-Christian, version of these Aesopic fables.

There are several features of the expression that recommend this direction of influence. The expression as a whole occurs nowhere else in Jewish or Christian literature, so it is not particularly at home there. The use of ὦ with the vocative is rare in the New Testament, as in Koine Greek generally, in contrast to its regular usage in Classical Greek. It occurs in only three different passages in the gospels: Jesus addresses the Canaanite woman ὦ γύναι (Matt 15.28); Jesus addresses the crowd ὦ γενεὰ ἄπιστος (Mark 9.19 – from which the expression is drawn verbatim in Luke 9.41 and Matt 17.17); and Jesus addresses his two disciples in the passage under consideration here. The first half of the expression, ὦ ἀνόητε/ὦ ἀνόητοι, with 'O' + 'fool(s)' in the vocative, is very rare in Jewish or Christian literature: never in the Septuagint, only once in Philo (*De somniis* 2.181), and only once elsewhere in the New Testament, when Paul addresses the Galatians thus

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ὦ ἀνόητοι Γαλάται (Gal 3.1). On the other hand, this word combination is fairly common in Classical and Hellenistic Greek literature: Sophocles, Aristophanes (three times – contracted ὦνόητε/ὦνόητοι), Plutarch (twice), Maximus the Sophist (twice), Chariton, Philostratus, Alciphron etc. The second half of the expression, βραδεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ 'slow in heart', occurs nowhere else in Jewish or Christian literature. In fact, in the entire Septuagint and New Testament the adjective βραδύς occurs only here and in Jas 1.19, in an equally aphoristic expression, again with Classical rather than Septuagintal or New Testament resonance: ἔστω δὲ πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ταχὺς εἰς τὸ ἀκοῦσαι, βραδὺς εἰς τὸ λαλῆσαι, βραδὺς εἰς ὀργήν 'let every man be swift to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger'. From Classical and Hellenistic literature, on the other hand, one can compare such similar expressions as προνοῆσαι βραδεῖς 'slow to understand' (Thucydides 3.38.6) and βραδὺς πρὸς ὀργὴν 'slow to anger' (Menander's *Sententiae* 60). In short, the expression ὦ ἀνόητε/ἀνόητοι καὶ βραδὺς/βραδὺ/βραδεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ is lexically and syntactically more Classical than Koine, and it resides more comfortably in a pagan context, such as in Aesop's fables, than in a Jewish or Christian context, such as in the gospel of Luke.

More noteworthy than the language and syntax of the expression, however, is the metre in which it is ensconced: within the prose of the gospel of Luke the expression sticks out as an almost perfectly crafted full iambic trimeter verse: - ▫ ⏑ - / - ‖ - ⏑ - / - - ⏑ - (ὦ ἀνόητοι καὶ βραδεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ). Moreover, the main caesura falls in its regular place after the anceps of the second metron, and Porson's law regarding the anceps of the third metron is observed (i.e. that if long, and if followed by a word-break, it must be a monosyllable).[15] The only possible blemish is that the alpha-privative of ἀνόητοι, which is a naturally short vowel, should scan as a long syllable here. But this is permissible: the lengthening of the alpha-privative for metrical purposes is a liberty taken regularly in ancient Greek poetry (epic, lyric, tragedy and comedy) – e.g. in the adjective ἀθάνατος 'deathless'.

The iambic trimeter is, of course, the metre most like natural human speech, as Aristotle reminds us in his *Poetics* (1449a), and so it is possible that Luke at some point in his life blurted out a full iambic trimeter verse entirely by accident. It seems most unlikely, however, that this event, remarkable as it was on its own, would have coincided, again entirely by accident, with the utterance of a rhetorical and poetic expression like this one – and, moreover, that this expression would then appear in two Aesopic fables in a metrical form that evolved from the iambic trimeter. It seems more likely that Luke is quoting a Classical or Hellenistic Greek poetic expression here, and, given that the expression occurs verbatim in the two

15 Or, put another way, when an iambic trimeter verse ends in a word forming a cretic (- ⏑ -), it is regularly preceded either by a short syllable or, if long, by a monosyllable.

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later versions of Aesop's fables, it seems plausible that Luke is drawing from an ancient version of an Aesopic fable or proverb.

Let us assume for a moment that Luke is, in fact, quoting here from an Aesopic fable – or at least from a free-floating Aesopic proverb. It may seem strange to some that the gospel writer would put the words of Aesop into the mouth of Jesus. But should it? Luke was not an eyewitness to the events that he is narrating, and he makes no claim to be recording the *ipsissima verba* of his subjects. On the contrary, as he confesses in the prologue to his gospel (1.1–4), he is writing at some distance from the events and is therefore relying on a potpourri of oral and written traditions. Moreover, in his gospel (see further below), and even more so in Acts, Luke, like many Classical and Hellenistic historians, ornaments the speeches of his internal narrators by putting into their mouths what he deems most appropriate to the occasion. Sometimes what Luke deems most appropriate is a quotation from a Classical or Hellenistic poet: he places part of a very suitable dactylic hexameter verse from the Hellenistic poet Aratus' eulogy to Zeus (*Phaenomena* 5) in the mouth of Paul on the occasion of his speech to the Athenians (Acts 17.28: τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν 'for we too are his offspring'); he appears to place part of an iambic trimeter verse from the Classical tragedian Euripides (*Ion* 8) in the mouth of Paul on the occasion of his address to the Roman chiliarch in the Antonia fortress in Jerusalem (Acts 21.39: οὐκ ἀσήμου πόλεως πολίτης '(I am) a citizen of no mean city'); and he appears to place part of an iambic trimeter proverb from the Classical poetic tradition (probably Euripides' *Bacchae* 795, possibly Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* 1624 or Pindar's *Pythian* 2.172–3) in the mouth of the resurrected Jesus in Paul's account before King Agrippa of his experience on his journey to Damascus (Acts 26.14: σκληρόν σοι πρὸς κέντρα λακτίζειν 'it is difficult for you to kick against the goad'). Likewise, here at the end of his gospel, in crafting the details of his version of the story about the events on the way to Emmaus, Luke appears to place in the mouth of the resurrected Jesus a well-known Aesopic proverb in metrical form.

How was Luke familiar with these Classical and Hellenistic Greek verses? While we have no definite biographical information about the gospel writer, it is almost certain that someone who was as proficient in the Greek language as he demonstrates in his gospel and in Acts must have experienced a typical Hellenistic Greek education at least through the primary and secondary levels. Whether he spent the early years of his life in Syrian Antioch, as the early traditions about him relate, or in any other urban centre in the Eastern Mediterranean, he would have received a type of education that had been remarkably homogeneous for some centuries, and would continue to remain so for several more: i.e. Luke would have been educated in the ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία 'educational curriculum' regularly undertaken by children of the upper social classes throughout the Greek-speaking cities of the Eastern Mediterranean

during the Hellenistic and early Roman periods. This educational curriculum began, at the primary level, with the reading, copying, memorising and construing of maxims, fables and short stories about famous historical and mythical figures, and then it proceeded, at the secondary level, to the study of a larger range of Classical and Hellenistic poetry. In other words, the fundamental process of learning to read and write in the Greek language at a primary and secondary school level would have brought Luke into contact at an early stage in his life with the ancient poets. Aesopic fables were an important component of this curriculum at the primary level, and even the later *progymnasmata*, the graded series of exercises for teaching prose composition and elementary rhetoric at the secondary level, had as their simplest exercises the mythoi, among which the fables of Aesop were standard.

The primary evidence for the centrality of Aesopic fables in the educational curriculum is substantial. The first-century CE rhetorician Quintilian, who prescribes the training of an aspiring orator from infancy onwards in a long treatise called *Institutio oratoria*, suggests that a student of rhetoric should at an early stage study Aesop's fables, learning to paraphrase the verse forms in simple prose, analysing each verse, giving its meaning in a different language, and then proceeding to a freer paraphrase in which the student abridges or embellishes the original (1.9.1–3). Aelius Theon, the first-century CE rhetorician from Alexandria in Egypt who offers the earliest surviving specimen of *progymnasmata*, quotes, refers to or mentions Aesop six times. The progymnastic exercises of 'Hermogenes' or 'Libanius' (second–fourth century CE), Aphthonius (fourth century CE) and Nicolaus (fifth century CE) mention Aesop an additional seven times. From the Greek papyri of the period under consideration (100 BCE–200 CE), excavated from the sands of Egypt, there have survived nine manuscripts that include Aesop, two of them school texts, as well as two manuscripts that include Babrius, one of them a school text. Fourteen fables of Babrius have been found, badly written and with many errors, on some third-century CE schoolboy's wax tablets.[16] As a measure of the familiarity of the general reading public with Aesopic fables and proverbs during this period, we may simply observe that the philosopher and biographer Plutarch, a contemporary of Luke, quotes, refers to or mentions Aesop fifty times in his various works.[17]

16 These are the so-called *Tabulae ceratae graecae Assendelftianae,* published by D. C. Hesseling, 'On Waxen Tablets with Fables of Babrius (Tabulae Ceratae Assendelftianae)', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 13 (1893) 293–314, which were acquired at Palmyra in Syria in 1881 and are now in the library at Leiden University.

17 On the common use of Aesop's (and Babrius') fables at the primary level of the ancient educational curriculum, see H.-I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity* (London and New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956) 160–64. R. Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) 137–43, 192–201 emphasises the popularity in the primary and secondary schools of the

In sum, it seems most natural for Luke, in crafting his version of the gospel from his inherited sources, to have drawn from the fables and proverbs of Aesop, as well as from other mythoi, that were so central to his own educational training.

To be sure, similarities between Aesopica and the gospels have not gone unnoticed by New Testament scholars. Some of the similarities that have been observed are very broad in scope: for example, that both the novelistic *Life of Aesop* and the gospel accounts of the life of Jesus portray a prophet or sage who suffers a fate typical of a scapegoat; that Aesop's fables and Jesus' parables are generically similar (i.e. short, moralising stories, rooted in oral tradition, that draw lessons from the natural world about human experience); that both Aesop and Jesus became prominent enough in later generations to serve as repositories for free-floating proverbs (i.e. many sayings were falsely attributed to them).[18]

Several more specific themes common to Aesop's fables and Jesus' parables have been perceived by New Testament scholars, but often the points of contact are very few and the comparisons are very loose: e.g. that the Aesopic fable of the miser who buries a lump of gold in the ground (Chambry 345) is paralleled in Jesus' parable of the talents, in which one of the three servants buries his master's money in the ground rather than risk investing it (Matt 25.14–30) – the similarities between the vocabulary and details of these two stories, not to speak of their underlying messages, are very slight indeed.[19]

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poets Homer, Hesiod, Euripides and Menander and observes that no prose was read except for fables, such as those of Aesop and Babrius, and gnomic works of Isocrates (e.g. *Ad Demonicum, Ad Nicoclem*). On the more general use in the literature of the period of maxims and morals, including Aesopic fables, see T. Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 120–51.

18 On the similarities between the novelistic biography of the *Life of Aesop* and Mark's gospel, see, for example, W. Shiner, 'Creating Plot in Episodic Narratives: The life of Aesop and the Gospel of Mark', *Ancient Fiction and Early Christian Narrative* (ed. R. F. Hock *et al.*; Atlanta: Scholars, 1988) 155–76; for a comparison of the *Life of Aesop* with the gospels of Mark and John, see L. M. Wills, *The Quest of the Historical Gospel: Mark, John, and the Origins of the Gospel Genre* (London: Routledge, 1997) 23–50. On the generic similarities between Aesop's fables and Jesus' parables, see, for example, A. Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*, vol. I (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1899²) 94–115; R. Dithmar, ed., *Fabeln, Parabeln und Gleichnisse: Beispiele didaktischer Literatur* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1970); M. A. Beavis, 'Parable and Fable', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52 (1990) 473–98; F. Vouga, 'Die Parabeln Jesu und die Fabeln Äsops: Ein Beitrag zur Gleichnisforschung und zur Problematik der Literarisierung der Erzählungen der Jesus-Tradition', *Wort und Dienst* 26 (2001) 149–64.

19 Cf. D. Flusser, 'Aesop's Miser and the Parable of the Talents', *Parable and Story in Judaism and Christianity* (ed. C. Thoma and M. Wyschogrod; Mahwah: Paulist, 1989) 9–25.

Other even looser parallels have been marshalled: for example, Aesop's fable of the fisherman whose net is able to capture the large, but not the small, fish (Chambry 25) shares a common setting with Jesus' parable of the fishermen who pick through the results of their catch (Matt 13.47–8); Aesop's fable of the bird catcher who resorts to serving his tame partridge as a meal to an unexpected guest (Chambry 286) shares a common situation with Jesus' parable of the man who asks his friend for three loaves of bread to feed an unexpected guest (Luke 11.5–8); Aesop's fable of the farmer who takes his axe to a barren fruit tree until he discovers honey inside (Chambry 85) shares some common features with Jesus' parable of the man who intends to cut down a barren fig tree (Luke 13.6–9).[20] In all these perceived parallels, however, the similarities in vocabulary and detail are very slight, and in most cases the underlying thrusts of their messages are completely different.[21]

In short, most parallels that have been perceived between Aesopica and the gospels simply share common themes, situations, customs etc. that are universal in nature and do not require an assumption of a genetic connection between the texts. What we need to establish a genetic connection are not simply commonly used expressions but actual verbal parallels, ideally sequences of identical words that are atypical rather than trite in nature. And if these sequences of identical words are ensconced in identical metres, as in the expression under consideration in the two Aesopic fables and in the gospel of Luke, a genetic connection seems all the more probable. This is, of course, too much to expect in every case, but in addition to the passage under consideration I would like to offer two others for which a fairly strong case can be made for some level of genetic relationship.

20 These three parallels, among others, are marshalled by M. Wojciechowski, 'Aesopic Tradition in the New Testament', *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 5 (2008) 99–109. On the basis of such parallels Wojciechowski has proposed a genetic connection between the Aesopica and the gospels, i.e., that the gospel writers, or even that Jesus himself, actually knew the Aesopic tales and were drawing from them.

21 Some perceived parallels have bordered on the absurd: for example, Aesop's fable of the beaver who bites off its own testicles and casts them aside in order to avoid capture is compared to Jesus' advice on several occasions to cut off a limb if it is causing someone to stumble (Matt 5.29–30, 18.8–9, Mark 9.43–7) and to his praise of eunuchs who have castrated themselves for the kingdom of heaven (Matt 19.12) (so Wojciechowski, 'Aesopic Tradition, 105). The *Neuer Wettstein* draws a few parallels between Aesopic fables and stories recorded in the gospels, but these parallels arise simply as a result of sharing a common situation or context: for example, the story in the three synoptic gospels about Jesus calming the storm (Mark 4.35–41, Matt 8.23–7, Luke 8.22–5) and two Aesopic fables about shipwrecked sailors praying to the gods for help (Chambry 53, 309) are cited as parallels in the *Neuer Wettstein* on Mark 4.35–41. But a shipwrecked sailor praying for help must have been one of the most commonplace occurrences in antiquity! Such 'parallelomania' is so prevalent in the *Neuer Wettstein* that it is difficult, as Vergil once remarked of Ennius' poetry, 'to find the pearls amidst the dung'.

4. Luke 7.32 and Matthew 11.17: 'We played the *aulos* ('reed-pipe') for you, and you did not dance.'

In the gospel of Luke (7.32) Jesus censures the 'men of this generation' by likening them to children sitting in the marketplace who call to one another: ηὐλήσαμεν ὑμῖν καὶ οὐκ ὠρχήσασθε, ἐθρηνήσαμεν (ὑμῖν some mss.) καὶ οὐκ ἐκλαύσατε 'we played the *aulos* ('reed-pipe') for you, and you did not dance; we lamented (for you), and you did not weep'. An almost verbatim parallel in Matthew (11.17), which occurs in the same thematic context, indicates that the gospel writers are probably drawing from a common source (i.e. 'Q').[22] Jesus' expression, with its metaphoric quality, vivid vocabulary and imagery, and parallelism between the two clauses of the couplet, appears to be a quotation of a proverb in some poetic form, but it does not draw obviously from the Septuagint or any other Semitic source. The first clause is foreign to the Septuagint, with the two verbs never occurring in combination there – though they occur in combination very commonly in Classical and Hellenistic Greek literature. The two verbs of the second clause are occasionally paired in the Septuagint and elsewhere in the New Testament (e.g. Mic 1.8, Jer 10.1; Luke 23.27, John 16.20), but they are not uncommonly paired in Classical and Hellenistic Greek literature as well, including in Aesop's fables.

The meaning of the introduction to the proverb (Luke 7.31–2, Matt 11.16) and, indeed, of the two-part proverb itself (Luke 7.32, Matt 11.17) is not transparent: what is the significance of the children calling to one another as they sit in the marketplace? Who are the 'we' and the 'you' of the proverb, both literally and metaphorically? What is the symbolism behind playing the aulos, dancing, lamenting and weeping?[23] The gospel writers attribute a rather perplexing interpretation to Jesus in the two verses that follow (Luke 7.33–4, cf. Matt 11.18–19):

22 The Synoptic Problem has not been of central concern thus far, since our focus has been on a verse that is unique to the gospel of Luke (24.25), but it will pertain at some level to the following consideration of double tradition material (Luke 7.24, 32 and Matt 11.7, 17). I use the shorthand 'Q' in a very inclusive sense, to signify not a single recoverable Greek manuscript but rather a complex array of oral traditions and written documents, mostly in Greek, to be sure, but some, perhaps, in Aramaic. 'Q-scepticism', along the lines of the Farrer hypothesis, has perhaps drawn in the reins on some of the extravagances of those wishing to reconstruct the text of a specific, tangible artefact, lay it out on a page with chapter and verse numbers, and study it in isolation from the extant gospels (viz. some of the fellows of The Jesus Seminar and their *epigoni*), but it has not, in my view, undermined the fundamental building blocks of the almost two-centuries-old two-source theory.

23 A concise summary of the various solutions that have been offered for this notorious *crux* can be found in U. Luz, *Matthew 8–20: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001) 145–50; these solutions are somewhat more fleshed out in D. Zeller, 'Die Bildlogik des Gleichnisses Mt 11:16/Lk 7:31', *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 68 (1977) 252–7. M. Casey, *An Aramaic Approach to Q* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 129–42 has added a new and intriguing interpretation of the two-part proverb,

'For John the Baptist has come neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say "He has a demon!" The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say "Look at this glutton and wine-bibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!"' Those who play the aulos, and those who lament, then, are apparently to be understood as the prophets, and more specifically Jesus and John, and those who fail to respond by dancing, and by weeping, are the people of this generation, who do not heed the prophets. It is critical to observe that Jesus' addendum forms a chiastic response to the two-part proverb: the abstemious John is the one who lamented; the hedonistic Jesus is the one who played the aulos. In neither case did the people of this generation respond correctly, or in a timely fashion, to the prodding of the prophet.

In the absence of any obvious Semitic source, it is worth considering if a very early Christian tradition is placing a Classical or Hellenistic proverb in the mouth of Jesus here. And one readily finds a possible model – at least for the first clause of Jesus' expression – in a very popular and well-attested Aesopic fable, which I summarise as follows. There once was a man who saw some fish swimming in the sea and played a tune on his aulos in an effort to entice them to come ashore. When his hopes were unrealised he resorted to his net. As the captured fish were flopping about on the shore, the man chastised them, saying, ὑμεῖς, ὅτε μὲν ηὔλουν, οὐκ ὠρχεῖσθε, νῦν δέ, ὅτε πέπαυμαι, τοῦτο πράττετε 'when I was playing the aulos you did not dance, but now, when I cease playing, you do' (Halm 27, Chambry 24, Perry 11, Hausrath 11; cf. Babrius 9, Aphthonius 33).

If there is a genetic connection here, the direction of influence is clear, for the fable is attested already as early as the fifth century BCE. Herodotus (1.141) places the fable in the mouth of King Cyrus in his report of the fate of the Ionian and Aeolian Greeks of Asia Minor, who had previously refused Cyrus' request to switch their allegiances from the Lydian King Croesus (cf. 1.76), but are now, in the face of Cyrus' conquest of Lydia, very eager to obtain his favour. Cyrus dismisses them by relating a tale, which I summarise as follows. An aulos player once saw some fish in the sea and began playing his aulos to them in the hope that they would be drawn willingly to shore. When this ruse failed the aulos player instead cast a net and forcefully hauled a great number of the fish to shore. When he saw the fish flopping about on the shore, he censured them, saying, παύεσθέ μοι ὀρχεόμενοι, ἐπεὶ οὐδ' ἐμέο αὐλέοντος ἠθέλετε ἐκβαίνειν ὀρχεόμενοι 'stop dancing for me, since when I was playing my aulos you were unwilling to come out dancing'. Both the context (i.e. 'you should have heeded my words sooner', 'you would have been better off had you complied willingly') and the vocabulary ('playing an aulos' to those who

understanding it as an address directed *at* John and Jesus respectively rather than spoken (metaphorically) *by* them.

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'refuse to dance') are similar to the proverb in the gospels. Also, Herodotus, like Luke and Matthew, proceeds to explain the meaning of the proverb – although Matthew and Luke put the explanation in Jesus' mouth, while Herodotus uses his own authorial voice.

But the gospel writers need not have been familiar with the text of the *Histories* of Herodotus himself. The first-century CE rhetorician Aelius Theon includes this Herodotean tale of the aulos-player in his *progymnasmata* as one of four examples of fables from Classical historians that he considers worthy of imitation by students in their rhetorical exercises (vol. II, p. 66 in L. Spengel's edition). This is an indication that the fable was a commonplace in the educational curriculum of the time, and that the author(s) of the source(s) of this 'double tradition material' could have been recalling it from school exercises he had once performed as a student. Moreover, while Herodotus' version is the earliest extant attestation of the fable, it survives, as noted above, in several later Aesopic collections as well: e.g. Babrius 9, Aphthonius 33. The wording that is most similar to that of the gospels is a prose version found in many manuscripts that appear to owe their origin to a very early collection of Aesopic tales (Halm 27, Chambry 24, Perry 11, Hausrath 11). In this prose version the fisherman chastises the netted fish: ὦ κάκιστα ζῷα, ὑμεῖς, ὅτε μὲν ηὔλουν, οὐκ ὠρχεῖσθε, νῦν δέ, ὅτε πέπαυμαι, τοῦτο πράττετε 'O most evil creatures, when I was playing the aulos you did not dance, but now, when I cease playing, you do.' It is possible, therefore, that the author(s) of the source(s) of this 'double tradition material' drew from a popular Aesopic fable or proverb rather than from the specific passage of Herodotus' *Histories*. As we shall see, the appearance of another possible Aesopic parallel a bit earlier in this same discourse (Luke 7.24, Matt 11.7) may also give some plausibility to the idea of an Aesopic source for this proverb.

5. Luke 7.24 and Matthew 11.7: 'A reed shaken by the wind'

Having just entertained an enquiry from two emissaries of John the Baptist, Jesus addresses his own followers about their reception of the prophet (Luke 7.24–5):

> Τί ἐξήλθατε εἰς τὴν ἔρημον θεάσασθαι; κάλαμον ὑπὸ ἀνέμου σαλευόμενον; ἀλλὰ τί ἐξήλθατε ἰδεῖν; ἄνθρωπον ἐν μαλακοῖς ἱματίοις ἠμφιεσμένον; ἰδοὺ οἱ ἐν ἱματισμῷ ἐνδόξῳ καὶ τρυφῇ ὑπάρχοντες ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις εἰσίν.
>
> 'What did you go out into the desert to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man wrapped in soft clothes? Behold, those who dress in costly clothing and luxury live in royal (houses).'

Again, an almost verbatim parallel in Matthew (11.7–8) indicates that the gospel writers are probably drawing from a common source (i.e. 'Q'). The passage's

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credentials as a saying very early ascribed to Jesus are further burnished by a close parallel in the *Gospel of Thomas* 78: 'Jesus said, "Why have you come out to the countryside? To see a reed shaken by the wind? Or to see a m[an] who is wearing a soft garment li[ke your] kings and your nobles? They have soft garments on, but they are unable to know the truth."'[24]

There is little doubt, then, that the gospels of Matthew, Luke and Thomas have preserved a very early tradition about Jesus. But what is the origin of the colourful language of Jesus' rhetorical questions? No close Septuagintal parallels for any of the expressions present themselves, and, in fact, the expressions all seem more comfortable in a pagan than in a Jewish or Christian context.[25] Most conspicuously, there is an entire family of fables attributed to Aesop that are centred precisely on the image of a reed being shaken by the wind (Halm 179, Chambry 101, Perry 70, Hausrath 71, 239; cf. Babrius 36, Aphthonius 36, Avianus 16). Many versions of these fables entail a contest of sorts between a slender reed and a large tree: an oak, an olive or a cypress. The reed, though criticised for its weakness, manages to withstand the wind much more successfully than the larger trees.

The version of the fable closest verbally to the expression in Luke and Matthew is a prose version of the Fable of the oak and the reed in the sixteenth-century manuscript Parisinus 105:

> Δρῦς καὶ κάλαμος περὶ ἰσχύος ἤριζον. ἀνέμου δὲ σφοδροτάτου ἐπιπνεύσαντος ὁ μὲν κάλαμος σαλευόμενος καὶ συγκλινόμενος ταῖς πνοαῖς τῶν ἀνέμων τὴν ἐκρίζωσιν ἔφυγεν, ἡ δὲ δρῦς δι' ὅλου ἀντιστᾶσα ἑαυτὴν ἐκ ῥιζῶν κατηνέχθη.
>
> ὁ λόγος δηλοῖ ὅτι οὐ δεῖ τοῖς κρείττουσιν ἀντιπίπτειν.
>
> An oak and a reed were quarrelling about their strength. But when a very strong wind began to blow, the reed, though shaken and bent by the gusts of the winds, escaped being uprooted, while the oak, though having stood up entirely against the wind, was completely uprooted.
>
> The story shows that one must not resist those who are stronger.

That there is a genetic relationship between Aesop and the gospels in the particular expression 'a reed shaken by the wind' is supported by the fact that in all of surviving Greek literature only in the Aesopic fable and in the gospel passages

24 Translation of the Coptic text by S. J. Gathercole, *The Gospel of Thomas: Introduction and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2014) 496.

25 Passages in the Septuagint that contain one or two of the lexical items of the expression 'a reed shaken by the wind' are sometimes offered as parallels (e.g. Isa 7.2, 17.13, 42.3; Ps 83.13 (= LXX 82.14); Wisdom of Solomon 4.4), but the contexts are usually quite different, and the noun κάλαμος 'reed' is never paired with the verb σαλεύω 'shake' in the Septuagint.

does the combination of these three specific Greek words occur: κάλαμος, ἄνεμος, σαλεύω (reed, wind, shake).

6. Aesopic Influence within the Context of Luke's Cultural Milieu

We began this survey by considering a passage unique among early Christian literature to the gospel of Luke – 'O foolish ones, and slow in heart' – that appears to have been drawn from an Aesopic fable or proverb. Reckoning that it should not then be surprising to discover that Luke found other occasions in his gospel on which to draw from the deep well of Aesopic fables and proverbs, we identified two other possible parallels – 'we played the aulos for you, and you did not dance' and 'a reed shaken by the wind' – that, based on their attestation also in the gospel of Matthew, in the case of the former, and in the gospels of Matthew and Thomas, in the case of the latter, can with some confidence be assumed to have arisen earlier than the time of the composition of the gospel of Luke.

We have proposed that the general popularity of Aesop's fables in the first century CE, and especially the considerable role they played in the educational curriculum of the time, lends plausibility to the assumption that the gospel writers were familiar with them and would have shown no hesitancy to incorporate Aesopic vocabulary, verbal combinations and proverbial expressions into their own narratives. It may lend some further credibility to the idea that the gospel writers were drawing from Aesopica if we were able to isolate similar Aesopic parallels in the writings of other Jewish and Christian writers within their cultural milieu. And, indeed, we do not have to search very far afield to find them. I offer, as a conclusion, four examples arranged chronologically.

The Old Testament apocryphal work *Sirach* (i.e. *Ecclesiasticus*), which was transmitted through the Greek Septuagint, advises its readers not to associate with people who are stronger and richer than they are, offering the following metaphor (13.2): 'What will a clay pot have in common with a metal cauldron? It will strike against it and be shattered.' This appears to be an allusion to Aesop's fable of the clay and bronze pots (Chambry 355, Perry 378), which offers the same advice illustrated by the same metaphor: 'Two pots, one clay and one bronze, were floating down a river. The clay pot said to the bronze: "Swim far away from me, and not nearby, for if you touch me I will break, and I would not willingly touch you." This fable teaches that life is precarious for a poor man who lives near a rapacious master.' The imagery of the metaphor is so distinctive that it seems very unlikely that these two expressions arose independently. Elsewhere the author of *Sirach* advises that a wise man should seek out the wisdom of all the ancients, and that he should travel in foreign lands and learn what is good and evil in the human lot (39.1–4): perhaps this allusion to an Aesopic fable is an illustration of the author following his own advice.

The Coptic *Gospel of Thomas* appears to draw from Aesopica in a proverb placed in the mouth of Jesus (102): 'Jesus said, "[W]oe to those Pharisees, for they are like a dog sleeping in the manger of so[me] cattle, for it neither eats nor al[low]s the cattle to feed."'[26] That this was a saying very early ascribed to Jesus receives support from two passages in the gospels of Matthew and Luke that provide a context for the proverb: 'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, since you close the kingdom of heaven to humankind, for you do not enter yourselves nor do you allow entrance to others wishing to enter' (Matt 23.13); 'Woe to you, lawyers, since you have taken the key of knowledge; you yourselves have not entered, and you have prevented others wishing to enter' (Luke 11.52). Among a large body of proverbs attributed to Aesop we find one almost identical: κύων ἀναπεσὼν εἰς φάτνην αὐτός τε οὐκ ἐσθίει τῷ τε ὄνῳ ἐμποδίζει 'a dog lying next to a manger does not himself eat and also prevents the donkey (from eating)'.[27] This Greek proverb was well known in late antiquity and widely quoted, although the second animal appears sometimes as a horse, cow or ox rather than a donkey.[28] Whatever the immediate source of the proverb was for the *Gospel of Thomas*, this little nugget offers an intriguing link between the Jesus and Aesopic traditions.

The early Christian Church Father Clement of Alexandria mentions Aesop by name and paraphrases an Aesopic proverb in his explanation of why Jews refuse to eat swine (*Stromata* 7.6.33.3): 'Whence Aesop too did not badly say that swine cry out very loudly when they are seized, for they know that they are good for nothing except for sacrifice.' Clement appears to be referring here to an account in the *Life of Aesop* (48) in which Aesop is explaining that sheep remain silent when they are seized because they have become accustomed to the harmless process of being sheared or milked, whereas swine cry out loudly because their only useful function is to be sacrificed for their meat.

According to the Babylonian Talmud (*Baba Qama* 60b) a tale was once related by the second-generation Amoraic Rabbi Itzhak Nafha to illustrate a point to two of his disciples, each of whom had been insisting on a lesson in his particular field of interest: 'This is like a man who had two wives, a young one and an old one. The young one would pluck out her husband's white hair, whereas the old one would pluck out his black hair. Thus he finally became bald on both sides.' The Rabbi's tale is an almost verbatim translation of a widely known Aesopic fable, 'The

26 Translation of the Coptic text by Gathercole, *The Gospel of Thomas,* 569.

27 The Greek proverb appears in the fourteenth-century manuscript Mosquensis 239; it is catalogued as proverb number 74 in Perry, *Aesopica*, 276. J. F. Priest, 'The Dog in the Manger: In Quest of a Fable', *Classical Journal* 81 (1985) 49–58 catalogues all the attestations of the proverb but comes to no definite conclusions about the directions of influence.

28 *Greek Anthology* 12.236 (probably Strato of Sardis); Lucian, *Adversus indoctum* 30, *Timon* 14; Diogenianus the Grammarian, *Paroemiae* 2.83; many of the medieval Greek lexica, beginning with Hesychius.

Middle-Aged Man and his Two Mistresses' (Halm 56, Chambry 52, Perry 31, Hausrath 31; cf. Babrius 22, Phaedrus 2.2). In the Aesopic tradition the fable is intended to illustrate the perils of falling prey to two overly eager women; Rabbi Nafha uses the tale to illustrate the inappropriate behaviour of his overly zealous disciples. Similar expropriation of the Aesopic tradition appears fairly frequently in Jewish rabbinic literature.[29]

As we can see, the vast popularity of Aesop in antiquity was not an exclusively pagan phenomenon; the Aesopic tradition had crept deeply into the Jewish and Christian milieu as well. We should not be surprised, then, to discover that the author of the gospel of Luke was familiar with the Aesopic tradition and referenced it in his gospel. On the contrary, we should be surprised if we were to discover that he did not.

29 So H. Schwarzbaum, 'Talmudic-Midrashic Affinities of Some Aesopic Fables', *Laographia* 22 (1965) 466–83, who offers a dozen or so parallels.

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