The Enthymeme in Luke 19:9 and the Salvation of Zacchaeus

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Abstract

Studies on salvation in the Luke 19:1-10 Zacchaean story generally tend to exhibit an underdeveloped analysis of its rhetoric as part of the controversy genre. This paucity reduces salvation to an individual event and ignores the social effect of Lukan salvation in the story. To remedy this, it is here argued that the weight of the controversy genre is felt specifically in the rhetorical use of enthymeme in verse 9, and that Jesus’s enthymemic pronouncement of salvation reveals a social aspect to Zacchaeus’s salvation. The enthymeme supports Zacchaeus’s refutation of the crowd’s position; it insinuates and infers from contrariety and obligates the crowd to distribute honour to Zacchaeus. This function of enthymeme is based on the evidence of first-century rhetors, whose position differs from modern scholarship’s view of the enthymeme as a truncated logical syllogism. Salvation has a social effect. Jesus’s enthymemic pronouncement crowns Zacchaeus’s refutation by calling the crowd to reinterpret Zacchaeus’s social-religious status on the basis of legal precedent.

1. Introduction

The genre of the Zacchaean episode in Luke 19:1-10 is widely understood in terms of a pronouncement story¹ that intertwines call and controversy ‘sub-genres’ in

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which Jesus freely offers grace. Jesus reacts to Zacchaeus and to the crowd and pronounces salvation. Yet most analyses have stressed the episode’s call story genre, which inadvertently emphasises Zacchaeus’s declaration as the focal point of the story, with Jesus’s subsequent dictum functioning as a direct comment on that declaration and as an indirect glancing reply to the crowd’s criticism.

Though most studies acknowledge the fundamental role of controversy for the story, their interests limit further investigation into the conflict between Jesus/Zacchaeus and the crowd. Scholarship has focused predominantly on the intention and on the appearance, status, and character of Zacchaeus in relation to Jesus.


to Jesus. This is not to say that the consensus interpretation is incorrect, for the story does indeed culminate in Zacchaeus’s individual experience of salvation, a psycho-spiritual event in which he undergoes a ‘spiritual healing’. What is at issue here, however, are the implications of inadvertently curtailing investigation into the story’s controversy genre. Scholarship’s inadequate investigation of the mechanics and details of the controversy underlying the Zacchaeus narrative has resulted in two identifiable limiting effects on understanding salvation in the story: (1) considering the nature of Lukan salvation, the extent of Jesus’s response is only partially comprehended, hence (2) the social aspect of Zacchaeus’s salvation is only tentatively perceived. It stands to reason that a better developed understanding of salvation includes the controversy genre in the analysis, which necessitates an understanding of the ancient rhetorical devices used and their function in the story.

To be sure, Wolter’s comments are a reminder not to be remiss in understanding the influence of controversy on Jesus’s dictum: ‘Das Diktum Jesu gehört also zum Streitgespräch, und es fungiert als Antwort auf die in V. 7 an seinem Verhalten geübte Kritik.’ As this paper shows, the rhetorical function of Jesus’s pronouncement should be given its full and correct weight, which then demonstrates indisputably that it is a direct reply both to Zacchaeus and also to the crowd, thus revealing the social aspect of salvation in the story. This ultimately conforms to the multidimensional character of Lukan salvation. I argue that verse 9 of the Zacchaeus story is invested in Jesus’s/Zacchaeus’s controversy with the crowd since it presents Jesus’s pronouncement of salvation using the device of enthymeme – as it was understood and used in first-century rhetoric – so as to effect social and religious change for Zacchaeus.
2. What Was Rhetorical Enthymeme, as Understood in First-Century Literature?

It is necessary to begin with a prefatory clarification. Generally, rhetorical enthymeme consisted of a proposition followed in response by either an affirmative or a negative proposition and then an inferred conclusion, where one of the components remained unexpressed. It seems, however, that contemporary scholarship has unintentionally obfuscated the primary ancient understanding of enthymeme’s function, interpreting it with reference to the form of an Aristotelian syllogism forming part of a formal system of logic, rather than according to its intended function as a device forming part of a rhetorical system. According to this misrepresentation, enthymeme is seen as a logical syllogism with an unstated premise or conclusion. For instance, as an enthymeme, the syllogism

(A) all humans are mortal;
(B) Socrates is a human;
therefore,
(C) Socrates is mortal

may suppress premise (A), resulting in an argument with the form: ‘Socrates is a human; therefore Socrates is mortal’. This does not reflect how enthymeme functioned in ancient rhetoric. Though scholars such as Tannehill and Green – whose representative examples suffice for critique below – have correctly discerned the presence of enthymeme in Luke 19:9, they have characterised it wrongly. This article addresses this problem by identifying ancient patterns of enthymeme usage that clarify the presentation of salvation in the Zacchaean story.

According to first-century usage enthymeme was a brief argument, usually no longer than a sentence, drawn from contraries, and used particularly in courtroom rhetoric, that crowned or further emphasized the force of an argumentative part of a speech. Quintilian provides an apt illustration:

[Cicero] has already demonstrated by other arguments how unjust such conduct would be [by Caesar], while he adds it [enthymeme] at the period’s close as an epiphonema, not by way of proof, but as a crowning insult [extrema quasi insultatio] to his opponents.

10. Aristotle, Rhetorica 2.22.13-17 (Freese, LCL).
12. Quintilian, Inst 8.5.11 (Butler, LCL).
Rhetorical enthymeme therefore is not separate argumentation or just ornamentation but an encapsulation and strengthening of a prior argument: ‘nicely turned sentences or questions raised at climactic points in the course of the speech’.\(^\text{13}\) Enthymeme serves an argument and is in dependent relation to it. It is important to grasp that rhetors in the first century did not understand and use enthymeme as a syllogism rooted in the principles of logic (consisting of a main premise, minor premise, and conclusion, from which a part of the logical chain is omitted). A survey of notable ancient Greek and Latin rhetorical works of the first century presents varied possible uses of enthymeme. Ps-Demetrius writes ‘the enthymeme is a thought, expressed either controversially or in the form of a logical consequence’\(^\text{14}\) and ‘the enthymeme is a kind of rhetorical syllogism … [It] may be called an incomplete syllogism’.\(^\text{15}\) Cicero contends that ‘although every expression of thought may be called ἐνθύμημα (enthymema), that one which is based on contraries has, because it seems the most pointed form of argument, appropriated the common name for its sole possession’.\(^\text{16}\) Quintilian categorises the subject according to possible uses:

- Firstly it means anything conceived in the mind …
- Secondly it signifies a proposition with a reason …
- And thirdly a conclusion of an argument drawn either from denial of consequents or from incompatibles …

Taken together, these works suggest enthymeme could be understood in a number of ways during that time period:

1. Any expression of thought.
2. A thought, or sort of inference, as a consequence of or arising from an incompatibility or comparison.
3. A rhetorical syllogism of a kind.
4. An incomplete (ἀτελής) logical syllogism.

\(^\text{14}\) Demetrius, De elocutione 30 (Innes, LCL).
\(^\text{15}\) Demetrius, Eloc 32 (William Rhys Roberts, ed., Demetrius on Style: The Greek Text of Demetrius de Elocutione, Edited after the Paris Manuscript, with Introduction, Translation, Facsimiles, etc (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902)). Note, ἐνθύμημα συλλογισμός τίς ἐστι δητορικός is translated correctly as ‘the enthymeme is a kind of rhetorical syllogism’, contra Innes in LCL.
\(^\text{16}\) Cicero, Top 13.55 (Hubbell, LCL).
\(^\text{17}\) Quintilian, Inst 5.10.1-3 (Butler, LCL).
However, it is imperative that variations 1, 2, and 3 be distinguished from 4. Characterisation of enthymemes only as incomplete syllogisms derives from Stoicism’s imposition of the form of the Stoic logical syllogism upon enthymeme despite its probabilistic functioning in rhetorical cases. More is said below about the reason for this deviation.18

Though there was not one ‘official’ version of enthymeme, there was still a clear majority position. Conley’s analysis of the use of enthymeme in representative works and fragments from Isocrates to the Byzantine period shows that very few in antiquity held to a logical conception of enthymeme, a fact that Conley holds in contrast to what is today the consensus scholarly position, which views the enthymeme as a ‘truncated’ syllogism.19 It is certain that the ancients viewed the idea of contrariety as central to enthymeme function. They understood that enthymeme followed and supported a main contrary argument that was rooted in narrative context by building on that argument’s position. The enthymeme therefore assumed the audience had prior knowledge – previously supplied by the speaker or opponent – in the main argument, which provided the unexpressed proposition of the enthymeme. The enthymeme took up the argument’s position in an expressed proposition and inferred a conclusion supporting the oppositional/contrary function of the argument.20 Quintilian concedes that ‘most authorities reserve the term enthymeme for an inference based on an incompatibility or contrarium’.21


Jesus’s pronouncement spans verses 9 and 10. Though verse 10 is part of his declaration, it is functionally demarcated from verse 9 by the connective γάρ, which tells the reader to adopt a narrative rhetoric view that understands the story as a unit, part of the Lukan theological agenda for repentant sinners.22

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18. See discussion on p. 131.
20. Conley, ‘The Enthymeme in Perspective’, 175–176. Alternatively, the enthymeme’s two propositions may have been stated leaving the conclusion unexpressed as an assumed inference.
3.1 The Main Argument: Zacchaeus Refutes the Crowd’s Accusation (Luke 19:7-8)

The question of whether Zacchaeus defends his actions or declares his intentions has been thoroughly discussed elsewhere. For this article’s argument, the significance of Zacchaeus’s declaration is its nature as a response of protest to the accusation of the crowd.

3.1.1 The Crowd’s Accusation: Zacchaeus is a Sinner (Luke 19:7)

The crowd calls Zacchaeus a ἁμαρτωλός, a sinner (19:7). Verse 2 provides the basis for this characterisation: αὐτὸς ἦν ἀρχιτελώνης καὶ αὐτὸς πλούσιος. It was not because of Zacchaeus’s wealth in itself (18:26), but that it was most likely gained as ‘der telewénhs als portitor’.

The image of the tax farmer was coloured by ideology and prejudices. Though tax revenue was seen as vital to the Roman economy, the Roman elite did not consider its collection an honourable occupation and objected to its moral indiscretion. As Plutarch points out, it was disparaged because its activity exposed moral vices, which the elite ‘considered’ dishonourable. He writes

they [the elite] think it is a disgrace to be a tax-collector, which the law allows; for they themselves lend money contrary to law, collecting taxes from their debtors, or rather, if the truth is to be told, cheating them in the act of lending.

Though tax farmers incessantly sought to improve their social status by the accumulation of wealth, by designated benefaction, by association with the honour of their employers (e.g. through honorific inscriptions/dedications), and by their self-laudatory funerary inscriptions, they nonetheless ‘must have had an
ambiguous social status’ as their legal status and standing in society resulted in ‘status dissonance’.30

Notably, in Palestine it was the Pharisaic religious view of toll collectors that dominated categorisation.31 Scholars have identified rabbinic texts which state that tax collectors and by extension toll collectors were prone to dishonesty and as a result seen as morally impure rather than ritually impure.32 From among these, the talmudic commentary in b. Sanhedrin 25b on the traditional mishnaic position of early Judaism (m. Sanh. 3.3) that lists those who were ineligible to be witnesses or judges, also lists robbers, persons compelling a sale, and (in the robber category) herdsmen, tax collectors and publicans/toll collectors. Tax workers were disqualified because it was seen that they overcharged and hence were considered as robbers in Jewish law. Those listed by the Mishnah as ineligible share a common inclination to greed.33 Neusner writes ‘the Jews never regarded Roman rule as legitimate. Taxes were therefore seen to be robbery. The Pharisaic sages made no distinction between a tax collector and a thief or an extortioner.’34 These considerations reflect the compartmentalisation of the Tannaim, who

separated sin from the conception of ritual impurity. Certainly Zacchaeus’s occupation designated him a morally impure sinner.

The connotation of the term ἁμαρτωλοί as a derogatory expression also reflects a prevalent attitude which Trebilco argues was ‘everyone’s opinion within the Jewish world’ and is a predominant Gospels’ choice from a whole range of terms that designate ‘sinners’ as ‘outsiders’. The context indicates that ‘sinners’ are those recognised by all groups as ‘flagrant law-breakers’, outside the covenant, separate from those inside and therefore regarded as outside of the community. Importantly, Regev points to evidence from Qumran, and Greek texts and epigraphy from Hellenistic Egypt and Asia Minor, that testify to institutional exclusion of morally impure sinners from community rights and from civic and religious activities, in order to guard against the defilement of moral impurity. The significance of Regev’s and Trebilco’s observations for the Zacchaejan story, is that they signal social categorisation and describe a group-belonging trait. Zacchaeus is seen as a sinner, yet one who is a ‘quintessential tax-collector, a charter member, as it were, of the out-group’.

3.1.2 Zacchaeus’s Refutation: Restitution and Almsgiving (Luke 19:8)
The crowd’s accusation seems to assume that Zacchaeus’s wealth was gained by exploitative/extortive taxation. Zacchaeus’s declaration counters the accusation with a two-part argument that addresses (1) exploitation and (2) greed. The refutation in verse 8 assures obedience to court-ordered restitution for any accusation of defrauding/overcharging and assures generous almsgiving, as restitutive legal action will not always be a viable option. Despite the magnanimous

38. Trebilco, Outsider Designations, 124, 131.
39. Trebilco, Outsider Designations, 131; Wassen, ‘Jesus’ Table Fellowship,’ 149.
quality of the promised restitution, it seems further persuasion is necessary to counter the crowd’s position. Zacchaeus could add an enthymeme to encapsulate and strengthen his refutation. Yet this is not what happens. For strategic reasons, it is Jesus who pronounces the enthymeme that crowns Zacchaeus’s argument. His use of the term σωτηρία as a metonym for his association with Zacchaeus establishes Jesus’s position of authority and honour status and adds the necessary persuasive force to Zacchaeus’s declaration. Why was this necessary? It was none other than the crowd who in the story represented the public court of reputation, who decided if honour was acquired/distributed, or, in this case, that salvation was socially manifested. Jesus therefore pronounced the enthymeme, crowning Zacchaeus’s argument to ensure that the crowd would be persuaded to abandon its stigmatisation and distribute honour to Zacchaeus – to effect salvation socially for him.

In summary, the main argument and counter argument are as follows:

19:7 Proposition supplied by opponent: Zacchaeus is a sinner designate
19:8 Refutation by Zacchaeus: Payment of restitution and alms

3.2 Jesus’s Enthymeme Crowning Zacchaeus’s Argument (Luke 19:9)

Jesus’s enthymeme encapsulated and strengthened Zacchaeus’s argument in order to persuade the public court of reputation to distribute honour – socially manifested salvation – to Zacchaeus. To comprehend the enthymeme’s force in subduing the conflict, one must first correctly see its form and mechanics.

According to the conventions of rhetoric, the sentence of verse 9 is divided syntactically in two by the conjunction καθότι + καί (as), which also provides the dependent logical relation that identifies the form of the enthymeme in its components:

![Diagram of enthymeme components]

Encapsulates Zacchaeus’s argument; the contrary of an initial proposition unexpressed by Jesus but expressed by the crowd.

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is most likely a result of correcting cases of falsely accused taxpayers in Roman court. The Hebrew idea of restitution is firmly grounded in OT texts: Exod 21:30–36 (value); 22:1-4 (number: five/four/double); Lev 6:2-5 (a fifth); 24:18 (a life); Num 5:6-10 (a fifth); Ezek 33:15 (restoration).

43. The use of metonym is discussed below in section 4.3.

One feature immediately stands out. Jesus begins speaking to Zacchaeus in verse 9, πρὸς αὐτόν, yet by referring to Zacchaeus in the third person, as αὐτός in his supporting proposition, he then appears to reconstitute his audience to include the crowd. Why does Jesus speak this way? This shift to include the crowd is best explained by the rhetorical use of *insinuatio*. According to Quintilian, in ‘scandalous cases’ where a simple ‘direct appeal to the good will and attention of the judge’ was impossible, the ‘orator on such occasions insinuated himself little by little into the minds of his judges’. To the introduction in the exordium was added insinuation. For the insinuation to be effective, Quintilian advises that it may be helpful to point out something in the nature of the case or from the character of the client. Since the person-subject of the Zacchaean case is disgraceful and meets the public disapproval of the crowd, Jesus uses *insinuatio* to gain the attention and good will of those gathered. Jesus directs his proposition to ‘his judges’ by referring to Zacchaeus in the third person; he refers to the character of Zacchaeus in order to gain their attention and good will. By this, Jesus’s supportive proposition is able to strengthen Zacchaeus’s refutation of the crowd’s disapproval. The use of the third-person personal pronoun includes the crowd as his audience because Jesus is making a counter response to the crowd’s initial accusation. Jesus therefore uses *insinuatio* to facilitate the effectiveness of enthymeme. Importantly, this gives a clear indication as to how Jesus’s enthymeme is to be reconstructed.

As mentioned above, the representative studies of Tannehill and Green recognise the presence of enthymeme in Jesus’s pronouncement yet characterise it wrongly, imposing on it the form of a logical syllogism, thus obscuring its function. Tannehill clearly states that the enthymeme follows the form of a logical syllogism:

| Main premise (unstated and assumed) | God has promised salvation to the children of Abraham |
| Minor premise | Zacchaeus is a child of Abraham |
| Conclusion | God has promised salvation to Zacchaeus |

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46. Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 4.1.42 (Butler, LCL).
47. Quintilian, *Inst* 4.1.44
Though Green does not explicitly refer to the term ‘enthymeme’, he commits himself to its basic definition but understands its form and function as a logical ‘truncated syllogism’. He evidences this by stating that ‘Luke’s logic consists in two related syllogisms’ and by suggesting the following two logical syllogistic possibilities:

**Option 1:**

- **Main premise (unstated and assumed)**: Children of Abraham are those with lives (disposition and behaviour) oriented toward God
- **Minor premise**: Zacchaeus’s life is oriented toward God
- **Conclusion**: Zacchaeus is a child of Abraham

**Option 2:**

- **Main premise (unstated and assumed)**: Salvation is for the children of Abraham
- **Minor premise**: Zacchaeus is a child of Abraham
- **Conclusion**: Salvation is for Zacchaeus

Both Tannehill and Green are certain in their speculations that the crowd/readers would have recalled the missing major premise from the phrase ‘son of Abraham’ since Luke-Acts emphasises God’s saving purpose for Israel in many Gospel references. The difficulty with their reconstructions is that the text does not indicate that the crowd remembered any versions of their suggested missing major premises.

Unfortunately, both Tannehill and Green have allowed a common error to misshape their suggested enthymemic reconstructions. Aune finds that the majority of modern scholarship holds to a faulty anachronistic understanding of enthymeme that is due to a serious misreading of Aristotle’s writings on syllogism. Aune refers to the research of ‘an impressive number of scholars’ who show that Aristotle never ‘discussed syllogistic structure’ in relation to enthymeme, and never attempted to convert an enthymeme into a syllogism or define it as a truncated syllogism. The reason is that Aristotle considered the field of rhetoric to be distinct from the logical field. In the former, reasoning occurred according to probabilities; in the latter, scientific knowledge was gained according to apodeictic certainty. It is not surprising to find a ‘bewildering

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52. Aune, ‘The Use and Abuse of the Enthymeme’, 304.
polymorphism of what Aristotle in the *Topics* admits as syllogisms', but in the *Prior Analytics* syllogism is 'not any longer a description of what is actually practiced in dialectical games, or even in serious thinking ... it is rather like a mathematical problem and ... a predominantly theoretical solution is secured'. Aristotle then makes clear in *Rhetorica* that the rhetorical syllogism, the enthymeme, does not belong to the field of scientific demonstration but to the field of argumentation, as he was not studying in *Rhetorica* 'the syllogism as an inferential process ... but rather as a system of possible combinations leading to a given conclusion'. It holds true therefore that the form of a syllogism is determined by its usage or its function in a field.

The Stoics beginning with Zeno, Cleanthes, and Chrysippus blurred this clear distinction as understood by Aristotle and the rhetoricians. The Stoics were concerned with 'establishing truth rather than probability and devoted themselves, even as rhetoricians, to the subtleties of the logical syllogism'. Cicero notes that the enthymeme of the rhetors, which belongs to the contraries topic, appears similar to the third Stoic indemonstrable syllogism. By this reasoning Quintilian, who thought the enthymeme lacked a 'distinctly articulated argumentative structure', gave enthymeme the form of a logical syllogism and suppressed the first proposition to give it a concise pointed antithesis that gave a clearer expression to an enthymeme's conclusion. Under Quintilian the variations of enthymeme increased to include the truncated logical syllogism, defined as a 'Stoic syllogism'.

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58. Cicero, Top. 13.55
59. Cicero, Top. 14.56; Stoic indemonstrable syllogism states that if not both p and q, and if p, then not q; Burnyeat, 'Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Logic of Persuasion', 42.
Importantly, there is no satisfactory evidence indicating the author of Luke’s Gospel was influenced to this extent by Stoic philosophy.62 Jesus’s pronouncement in Luke 19:9 attests to syllogism functioning in rhetoric and exemplifies therefore its corresponding rhetorical form – the enthymeme as used by rhetors. It would be incorrect, even ‘un-Aristotelian’, to apply the form of a logical syllogism as proposed by the Stoics. The enthymeme in Luke 19:9 was constructed and used according to the concepts of ancient rhetoric mediated through Graeco-Roman rhetors. It is to these sources we now turn.

3.3 The First-Century Majority Position on Enthymeme

The first-century usage of enthymeme is best described in terms of its conceptual origin.63 Based on cases from early Greek oratory, Fredal challenges and redefines the idea of audience participation, arguing that it is unrealistic to require listeners to divert their attention to fill in a missing premise (even if it is common knowledge) as this would be counterproductive to the rhetorical event.64 What he proposes instead is that audience participation was not left up to them at all; rather their participation was carefully directed.

The strength of Fredal’s proposal rests on his explanation of the first step in the rhetorical enthymeme process: the audience is called to ‘enthymise’ (a version of ἐνθυμέομαι or equivalent translated as ‘remember’) some stated or accepted fact.65 This provides the initial proposition of the enthymeme. The second step is the placement of the remembered and accepted fact in a narrative context which gives fresh significance to that fact. Thirdly, the fact is given fresh meaning by a narrative context that helps answer a legal question. Steps two


65. Fredal, ‘Is the Enthymeme a Syllogism?’, 34.
and three provide the demonstrative or refutive response of either an affirmative or negative proposition of the enthymeme. Fourthly, the process ‘inverts the opponent’s argument to show that … his argument is incredible, shameful, unjust, or impossible’. This last step provides the conclusion of the enthymeme.

Fredal presents a persuasive case for ancient usage, and importantly points out that enthymeme was suited neither for syllogistic nor deductive material but for a narrative and semiotic context. Ps-Demetrius, Cicero, and Quintilian all confirm that the rhetorical environment of the first century was buoyed by conceptions in early Greek oratory. Thus the majority position of first-century rhetorical instruction inherited the fundamental understanding of the four-fold process of enthymeme in Attic oratory as observed by Fredal.


The importance of understanding Jesus’s enthymeme in terms of its rhetorical form and function is seen in its contribution to the salvific success in the conflict of the story. This can be demonstrated using the analytic structure provided by Fredal’s four-step process for rhetorical use of the enthymeme:

1. Call audience to remember stated/accepted fact.
2. Place remembered and accepted fact in narrative context which gives it new significance.
3. Give the fact fresh meaning in narrative context which helps answer a legal question.
4. Use the fresh meaning to overturn the opponents’ argument.

4.1 Step One: (Implicit) Call to Remember Accepted Fact – Zacchaeus is a Sinner

Enthymeme was used in rhetorical argumentation from contraries, which responded to an initial prompted statement of recollection. Though Jesus does not explicitly call the crowd to recollect stated or accepted information, by inviting himself to dinner he causes the crowd to ‘enthymise’ and consider the matter – ἰδόντες πάντες διεγόγγυζον λέγοντες ὅτι παρὰ ἁμαρτωλῷ ἀνδρὶ εἰσῆλθεν καταλῦσαι. The verbs ἰδόντες and διεγόγγυζον reflect the success of

Fredal, ‘Is the Enthymeme a Syllogism?’, 34.

Fredal, ‘Is the Enthymeme a Syllogism?’, 35. The audience may be directed to recall by some form of the verb ἐνθυμέομαι or by a synonym or by ‘perhaps no
Jesus’s statement. In verse 7 the crowd or ‘opponent’ recollects and avers that Zacchaeus is a sinner, a flagrant lawbreaker, and is designated an outsider because he is a chief toll collector. This proposition is unexpressed by Jesus but expressed initially by the crowd.

4.2 Step Two: Remembrance Refuted – Zacchaeus’s Sinfulness Placed in New Narrative Context

The crowd has called Zacchaeus a morally impure sinner, an outsider. According to the second step of Fredal’s proposal, the remembered and accepted fact needs to be placed in a narrative and semiotic context to give fresh significance to that fact. Jesus responds by crowning Zacchaeus’s argument and calling him the contrary, a son of Abraham, αὐτὸς υἱὸς Ἀβραάμ ἐστιν (19:9c). Jesus’s proposition encapsulates and illuminates Zacchaeus’s argument in verse 8: a son of Abraham is one who, like Abraham, renders justice/restitution and gives alms. Jesus’s enthymeme and Zacchaeus’s refuting argument function together as a device of rhetorical persuasion.

Here we encounter enthymeme’s fundamental function, which provides fresh significance to the crowd’s enthymising/recollection. An enthymeme should ‘crown’ an argument. An enthymeme is not just ornamentation, but an encapsulation and strengthening of a prior argument. Quintilian notes the significance of the connection between the enthymeme and its argument: ‘The most effective kind of enthymeme seems however to be that in which a reason is subjoined to a dissimilar or contrary proposition.’ The subjoined reason in this case is based on Zacchaeus’s refuting argument.

As stated above, Jesus uses insinuatio in order to gain the attention and good will of the crowd. The supporting proposition of Jesus’s enthymeme points out for the crowd something positive about Zacchaeus’s character. Also, Jesus gives fresh meaning to Zacchaeus’s declared acts by placing them in a narrative context and a semiotic context. In particular, Fredal’s third step seems to be addressed by this, in that a legal question is considered. Jesus addresses the question of directive verb at all’ or just the aid of indirect statements; James Fredal, ‘The Enthymizing of Lysias’, JHR 20 (2017): 12, https://doi.org/10.1080/15362426.2016.1271751.


70. Quintilian, Inst 5.14.4 (Butler, LCL).
Zacchaeus’s character from a legal standpoint; specifically, how does Jesus understand Zacchaeus to be a son of Abraham?

4.3 Step Three A Legal Question Considered – In What Sense Is Zacchaeus a Son of Abraham?

The figure of Abraham plays a role in the formation of Jewish identity within three main currents in the literature of Second Temple Judaism: national, emulatory, and eschatological. From these, the role of Abraham’s faith and obedience as a model for emulation commends itself as the main literary and conceptual influence behind Jesus’s response to Zacchaeus’s declarations. Abraham is a group prototype for Israel, necessary for collective identity, membership, and inclusion.

Some argue that Jesus’s expression reflects Zacchaeus’s imitation of Abraham’s hospitality. The Testament of Abraham and other related testamentary literature of that general period furnish evidence by emphasising ‘one virtue’:


72. Yet the possibility of understanding Zacchaeus as an actual descendant son of Abraham cannot be disregarded. This would indeed ascribe him honour, make him heir to promised blessings, and provide a possibility for group recategorisation. Philip F. Esler, The First Christians in Their Social Worlds: Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 25 states that ‘The Jewish interest in descent from Abraham was essentially a claim to the ascribed honour that came from having so illustrious a person as one’s ancestor.’ Further, H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (München: C.H. Beck’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1926) 1:117–119 point out that in Judaic literature is found the idea that Abraham’s merit was sufficient to secure God’s mercy for posterity. Yet this option does not have support as it relies on the value of ethnic privilege, an idea strictly repudiated at Luke 3:7-8. The eschatological interpretation of Jesus’s statement also merits consideration on the basis of Zacchaeus’s almsgiving. Such behaviour would result in a repository of merit for future salvation. According to Judaic literature, father Abraham would receive Zacchaeus in the age to come because of his almsgiving; Roman Garrison, Redemptive Almsgiving in Early Christianity (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 61–66. This interpretation of Jesus’s description alludes to Luke 16:19-31, though the comparison is inconsistent and its allusion tenuous; furthermore, the above identified present nature of salvation in the story mitigates against this eschatological interpretation of Jesus’s statement.

'Abraham exemplifies hospitality'. Though the story does imply the practice of hospitality, Jesus’s pronouncement certainly limits the role of his self-invitation to a separate microsequence of possible events. The episode does not actually describe Zacchaeus providing the elements of hospitality (protection, provision, shelter) apart from welcoming Jesus to stay with him. The story quickly moves past fellowship and shifts attention to the semblance of a challenge-riposte, to Zacchaeus’s declaration of restitution and alms followed closely by Jesus’s pronouncement. It is then the reader’s assumption that is needed to build a case for the imitative nature of Zacchaeus’s hospitality, a point the story has already departed from using salvation as a metonym for Jesus’s visitation/quest. It is improbable that Jesus’s pronouncement is the direct result of his experience of hospitality.

Zacchaeus does declare his emulation of Abraham’s model of faith and obedience, but instead of hospitality it is in terms of Abraham’s generosity and justice. Comparative evidence supporting this is found in the contemporary writings of Philo and the Tannaim of early Judaism, which clearly corroborates the idea that the ‘son of Abraham’ expression refers primarily to the emulation of Abraham’s justice and generosity. However, two preliminary observations are in order.

Firstly, it is likely that the ‘son of Abraham’ designation refers to the process of emulation as a means of group membership. In the Second Temple period, states Stern, the term ‘sons of the high priests’ is to be understood not as descent but in terms of group membership, as a generic term referring to any priest distinguished by reason of his high social rank. In a similar sense, the Lukan term ‘son of Abraham’ is also to be understood according to group or community membership. A ‘son of Abraham’ is to conform to norms represented by the καταλῦσαι imply ‘full meal hospitality’; however, this places an undue burden on the blended genres of the text.

76. See section 4.3 for further discussion.
prototypical figure of Abraham. A prototype is a concept formed by the views of members through generations. It is certain in this case that ‘son of Abraham’ is to be understood as semantically similar to ‘disciple of Abraham’, indicating one who belongs to a group whose members hold to the imparted behaviour and knowledge of a teacher, thereby – as a community – emulating the teacher.

Secondly, the object of Zacchaeus’s declaration is the emulation of Abraham’s generosity and justice, which is rooted in the fundamental Lukan view of the correct use of wealth by the rich. A comparison with the conflict story of Luke 11:37-54 between Jesus and the Pharisees (16:14) affirms this position. Jesus states in verse 41: πλὴν τὰ ἐνόντα δότε ἐλεημοσύνην, καὶ ἰδοὺ πάντα καθαρὰ ύμῖν ἐστιν. Kazen here observes that Luke’s text focuses on the inward state of the Pharisees, characterised by a neglect of moral purification, which reflects ‘a basic tradition about Jesus having arguments and making statements about the relative priority of justice over the impurity of vessels’. In short, Lukan Jesus criticises the Pharisees for neglecting social justice at the cost of ritual purity. The parallel but sharp contrast brings the message of Luke 19:8 into clear focus: Jesus in Luke 11:39-42 criticises the Pharisees, who likely claimed ascribed honour because of their Abrahamic descent (Luke 3:8), for their avarice and therefore their neglect of charity/alm and social justice. However, Jesus extols Zacchaeus, who has been called a shameful outsider, for his uses of wealth for charity and the rectification of social injustice.

Abraham is to be emulated for precisely this, writes Philo – for the justice he exemplified. Philo, having recounted wealthy Abraham’s resolution of the quarrelling between his and Lot’s herdsman, declares Abraham to be peaceful...
and a lover of justice.\textsuperscript{85} Philo describes Abraham’s actions of justice as wholly influenced by his unprecedented faith, love, and devotion to God.\textsuperscript{86} Importantly, Philo states that this reveals ‘the greatness and loftiness of [Abraham’s] soul’.\textsuperscript{87} Philo makes an interesting association regarding the soul. On God’s examination of Abraham’s soul by visitation/vision, Philo states that sight is queen of the senses since it is an exact image of the soul.\textsuperscript{88} Philo’s association is significant. God saw during his visitation that Abraham’s soul was ‘great and lofty’ surely because Abraham’s sight as a mirror represented that goodness exactly. In short, Abraham acted justly because his soul – that is, his sight – was good.

The ideas of being a disciple of Abraham and emulating his lofty soul/good sight in acts of generosity and justice are found together in the regulations of Mishnah m. Avot 2.9 and 5.19. The first Mishnah is attributable to the early stratum of tradition and to the most important disciple of the first-century Tanna Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkaï; the second Mishnah is a continuation of the teaching and ideology of the earlier stratum.\textsuperscript{89} According to the first, from Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus:

\begin{quote}
אמור להם, צאו וראו איזו דרכי ישארה שארה שרבך בא האדם. רב Elisור
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{85} Philo, \textit{Abr.} 209-216, 225.
\textsuperscript{86} Philo, \textit{Abr.} 170, 196, 270.
\textsuperscript{87} Philo, \textit{Abr.} 199 (Colson, LCL).
\textsuperscript{88} Philo, \textit{Abr.} 104, 153, 167.

\textsuperscript{90} ‘He [R. Johanan ben Zakkaï] said to them, Go forth and see which is the right way whereto a man should cleave. R. Eliezer said, \textit{A good eye.}’ Translated by Philip Blackman, \textit{Order Nezikin} (vol. 4 of \textit{Mishnayoth}; London: Mishna Press, 1954), 501; emphasis added.
Israelstam suggests that by ‘good eye’ the Tannaitic Rabbi Eliezer is referring to generosity, and cites Proverbs 22:9 in support.91 The second Mishnah, m. Avot 5.19, follows the earlier authority of m. Avot 2.9 and avers:

... וּכָּל מִי שֶׁיֵּשׁ בְּיָדוֹ שְׁלשָׁה דְבָרִים הַלָּלוּ, מִתַּלְמִידָיו שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אָבִינו

Again, Israelstam’s commentary equates ‘a good eye’ with the text’s allusion to generosity and cites Abraham’s just and generous dealings with the King of Sodom in Genesis 14:22 and Ephron the Hittite in Genesis 23.93 Furthermore, not only does the Mishnah distinguish group membership (‘disciple of Abraham’) from descent (‘our father’), but it identifies the norms represented by the prototypical figure of Abraham. A disciple/son of Abraham is to emulate his good eye, that is, his generosity and acts of social justice. In particular, the disciple is to emulate Abraham’s good inclination, which is equated with a good eye, and perform mitzvot as Moses did and give terumah generously.94

In Luke 19:9, Jesus speaks directly to the crowd to gain a favourable hearing, and the phrase αὐτὸς υἱὸς Ἀβραάμ ἐστιν95 refers generally to the desirable emulation of Abraham’s faith and obedience. Specifically, the phrase refers directly to the emulation of Abraham’s generosity and justice (restitution) by conformity to the group-defining norms represented by the prototypical figure of Abraham. In Zacchaeus’s particular case the phrase seems to call into question the legal stipulations of the type later codified in b. Sanhedrin 25b96 by alluding to Tannaitic opinion later codified in m. Avot 2.9 and 5.19 that set out the standards primarily for judges/witnesses, and as a result clearly exonerates Zacchaeus as righteous.97 Therefore, Jesus’s use of insinuatio and his argument of contrariety

91. Israelstam, ‘Aboth’, 19; Proverbs 22:9, ‘He who has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor’ (RSV).
92. ‘Whosoever has these three qualities is of the disciples of Abraham our father; … A good eye, (and) a lowly mind and a humble soul [are the traits] of the disciples of Abraham our father.’ Translated by Blackman, Order Nezikin, 4:536; emphasis added.
95. ‘He is a son of Abraham.’
96. See above section 3.1.1. The Crowd’s Accusation: Zacchaeus is a Sinner (Luke 19:7) for a reference to the details of b. Sanhedrin 25b.
97. Exception to the ineligibility of tax/toll collectors to be witnesses or judges is maintained by R. Judah. An example is R. Zerah’s father, a tax collector who behaved righteously, b. Sanhedrin 25b.
defined by a new narrative and semiotic context that encapsulates Zacchaeus’s argument are best supported by this interpretation.

4.4 Step Four: Fact Inverted – the Crowd’s Judgement Shown to be Unwarranted

According to Fredal, the fourth step in ancient enthymeme construction ‘inverts the opponent’s argument to show that ... his argument is incredible, shameful, unjust, or impossible’.98 The conclusion of Jesus’s enthymeme, Σήμερον σωτηρία τῷ οἴκῳ τούτῳ ἐγένετο,99 inverts the argument of the crowd by stating the inevitable consequence of Zacchaeus’s declaration and Jesus’s proposition. The enthymeme’s conclusion focuses the persuasive force of the main argument applying it within the semiotic context of the opposition/crowd. Instead of the crowd’s position that stigmatises Zacchaeus as a sinner, an outsider of shameful status, Jesus concludes that this cannot be since Zacchaeus provides evidence he is an emulator of Abraham’s justice and generosity – the traits of an insider of honour status. Strategically, Jesus achieves this inversion by the use of σωτηρία as a metonym in reference to οἶκος as a kinship unit within a system of social stratification.

Jesus uses σωτηρία metonymically to refer to an attribute of a divinity in place of the name.100 As Wolter states, ‘Mit σήμερον und τῷ οἴκῳ τούτῳ knüpft Jesus an seine Selbsteinladung von V. 5d an. Dementsprechend ist es nicht die von Zachäus in V. 8 ausgesprochene Ankündigung, sondern Jesu Einkehr bei ihm, die seinem „Heil“ brachte.’101 Luke associates verse 5 with verse 9 in order to create a metonymy focusing on a characterising activity of Jesus. Salvation has assumed the form of the visitation activity of Jesus and has in this manner visited Zacchaeus’s familial kinship unit, affecting it positively in a culture defined by an honour-shame system. Comparison with Luke 1:69, καὶ ἕγειρεν κέρας σωτηρίας

98. Fredal, ‘Is the Enthymeme a Syllogism?’, 34.
99. ‘Today salvation has come to this house.’
101. Wolter, Das Lukasevangelium, 615. ‘With σήμερον and τῷ οἶκῳ τούτῳ, Jesus connects to his self-invitation from verse 5d. Accordingly, it is not Zacchaeus’ pronounced announcement in verse 8, but Jesus’s stop off with him that brings “salvation” to him.’
ἡμῖν ἐν οἴκῳ Δαυὶδ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ,\textsuperscript{102} secures this meaning.\textsuperscript{103} Essentially, Jesus establishes his honourable divine status when he states that his visitation of Zacchaeus is in fact salvation’s visitation, and further that it is in response to Zacchaeus’s declaration and emulation of Abraham, which means therefore that salvation is honouring Zacchaeus.\textsuperscript{104} One may understand Jesus’s conclusion to mean ‘honour has come to this house’. The conclusion of Jesus’s enthymeme leaves the crowd with no recourse. To avoid the negative effects of a successful riposte against them, they need to recognise and distribute honour to Zacchaeus. Again, the shift in focus of the object of salvation from the individual – Zacchaeus – to his social and political kinship unit is a consequence of the enthymeme being an argument from contrariety directed to the attention of the crowd representing the public court of reputation. Jesus’s concluding pronouncement of salvation establishes grounds for recategorisation, and the conferral of honour or salvation as defined in a social-cultural context. Jesus obligates the crowd to confirm and acclaim that Zacchaeus now has access to honourable status and to community membership.


Of the four variations of enthymeme, evidence suggests that Jesus’s pronouncement of verse 9 is a \textit{rhetorical} enthymeme correctly understood as arising from an incompatibility or comparison. The enthymeme itself consists of an unexpressed opponent’s proposition that is rejected by a contrary proposition and followed by concluding statement of inversion. Zacchaeus’s refutive argument in verse 8 and

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{102} ‘... and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.’
  \item \textsuperscript{104} Philo provides precedential evidence that God praised/honoured Abraham because he fulfilled the ideal of the divine law in the unwritten law of his nature (Philo, Abr. 275). Similarly, Jesus honours Zacchaeus with acquired Torah-derived honour (Seth Schwartz, \textit{Were the Jews a Mediterranean Society? Reciprocity and Solidarity in Ancient Judaism} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 171, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400830985) manifested in salvation because he fulfilled ‘the ideal of the law governing the return of stolen property’ (Kilgallen, ‘Was Jesus Right’, 598). The significance of the law, as Luke demonstrates, is its capacity to be distilled into life-giving practical commands, such as is seen in 10:25-37 where Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18 are quoted. Zacchaeus takes what is in his circumstance the life-giving practical essence of the Torah upon himself, restitution and almsgiving, the right use of wealth.
\end{itemize}
Jesus’s crowning enthymeme of verse 9 (with its corresponding parts marked) are shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main argument with refutation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposition supplied by opponent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refutation by Zacchaeus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Enthymeme

- Contrary refutive proposition: Zacchaeus is a child of Abraham (+ sub-joined strengthening reason – v.8)
- Conclusion: Salvation for Zacchaeus

The function of the enthymeme of verse 9 crowns the main argument by soliciting the good will of the crowd and presents them with an opposing proposition that encapsulates Zacchaeus’s main argument of refutation. The crowd is called to rethink their initial accusation and Zacchaeus’s socio-religious status. Understanding the story’s rhetoric as presented in this paper illuminates the contribution of the controversy genre in the success of Jesus’s quest.

6. Summary

An analysis of the rhetoric of Jesus’s pronouncement in verse 9 reveals that it is a rhetorical device, used in argumentation, termed enthymeme. It is the case, however, that the majority position in contemporary scholarship, which understands ancient enthymeme as a truncated logical syllogism, conflicts with its actual first-century usage. The majority position in the first century understood enthymeme primarily as an argument from consequence, or as arising from an incompatibility or comparison. An exegesis of the relevant Zacchaean texts accurately reflects this majority position – that Jesus’s enthymeme is an inference based on contraries. Not only does this knowledge elucidate the function of the controversy genre of the Zacchaean story, but it also explicates the social effect of salvation for Zacchaeus.
The Lukan text corresponds to the function of enthymeme as used by rhetors in the construction of arguments: first the crowd puts forward the argument that Zacchaeus is a sinner or an outsider; Zacchaeus then refutes the designation by his declaration. Jesus then by the contrariety proposition of his enthymeme encapsulates Zacchaeus’s declaration and announces that Zacchaeus is instead to be considered Abraham’s son who emulates his generosity and social justice as an ingroup member. Finally, with the enthymeme’s conclusion, Jesus inverts the opposing proposition of the crowd by calling them to recognise, accept, and acclaim Zacchaeus as an ingroup member. The Zacchaean story demonstrates the effective use of a rhetorical device for the successful resolution of a conflict-quest story that is part of the fulfilment of Jesus’s mandate.

Bibliography


