

Lucan *Apologia* on Trial:  
Hidden Transcripts, Resistance Ethics, and Status Reversal in the Gospel of Luke

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## I. Introduction

During the first century of the Roman era, the early Christian movement suffered at the ruthless hands of the Roman authorities. Christians were persecuted in sporadic regions of the Roman Empire, and the Roman imperial authorities felt the need to thwart this movement because they feared Christianity was a threat to the Empire. It was in the Roman officials' best interests to suppress insurrection and rebellion. In order to quell fears of Roman persecution, some leaders in the early Christian movement had to show the Roman authorities that their new religious movement was not a threat to the Empire. Redaction critical studies of Luke's Gospel show that Luke's strategy to alleviate such fears was to write his Gospel in the form of an *apologia*. An *apologia* is a defense, and, in Luke's case, Lucan *apologia* was constructively incorporated into his story of the life and death of Jesus.

Roman rulers routinely demanded complete subservience to imperial rule, and surveilled and monitored any movements that were seen as rebellious or treasonous. This Honors Thesis will document a Lucan leitmotif (recurrent theme) beyond the traditionally accepted purpose of *apologia*, and highlight a corollary Lucan interest in the Gospel of Luke. On the surface, the evangelist sought to devise a written defense of Christianity's political innocence to the Romans, but after a closer reading of the Gospel, we will see that he actually had an oppositional purpose, as well. When thinking of Luke's Gospel solely as an *apologia*, it is strange to grapple with the idea of Luke as being totally compliant with the oppressive

regime that was persecuting his religious contemporaries. So, it makes sense for Luke to provide a *hidden transcript* which masked politically subversive and resistant religious and socio-political interests. This Honors Thesis will argue that Luke's Gospel was not only an *apologia* to the Romans, but that it also provided a hidden transcript to the vulnerable followers of the early Jesus movement within the Lucan communities. The term "hidden transcript" is the primary focus of James C. Scott's landmark book, *Domination and the Art of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. He writes: "Every subordinate group creates, out of its ordeal, a 'hidden transcript' that represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant."<sup>1</sup> Put into context with the Lucan narrative, the hidden transcript carries the notion that Luke's Gospel should not be taken at face value. Instead, his description of the life and death of Jesus should actually be understood as serving to both subvert the dominant, and as an expression of dissent towards the Roman authorities and their tyrannical power.

An analysis of Luke's inclusion of a "status reversal" motif in his gospel is imperative in gauging an understanding of dissent and subversion in the Lucan hidden transcript. Luke's status reversal motif can be understood by taking the term at face value. Essentially, status reversal portrays someone of a "high status" brought to a low status, and a person of "low status" elevated or brought to high status. However, this crude explanation of status reversal fails to account for the variety of reversals that are found in Luke's Gospel, as it may also

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<sup>1</sup> James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), xii.

refer to ontological reversals or existential changes in status: the blind being able to see, the hungry being fed, the sick being cured, etc. These instances can be found throughout the Gospel of Luke as Luke writes prolifically about different types of status reversal to convey his contempt towards the Roman regime. Luke weaves his hidden transcript into multiple literary genres and literary forms in his gospel-- hymns, parables, prophecies and even paraenetic (moral) examples set by Jesus during the course of his ministry. One salient instance of status reversal occurs during the Nazareth proclamation (Luke 4:16-30). This event takes place in Nazareth when Jesus announces that a passage from the Old Testament has come true in his presence. Jesus preaches: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."<sup>2</sup> This instance of status reversal in Luke's Gospel shows that those who benefit from God's salvation and beneficence will not be drawn primarily from the ranks of the rich, the propertied or the powerful. Instead they will be those of lower status.

In order to understand Luke's hidden transcript of dissent, we must first analyze the following: (1) who he was as a person, (2) the communities for whom he was writing, and (3) his apologetic agenda within the Gospel of Luke itself. After we have reviewed these three

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<sup>2</sup> Luke 4:18-19. All Bible quotations and references in this Thesis will be taken from: Michael D. Coogan, ed. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible. Augmented Third Edition, With the Apocrypha/Deuterocanonical Books*. New Revised Standard Version (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 103.

important rubrics, we will be able to understand why the Lucan apologetic framing was so pivotal in Luke's presentation of the Jesus movement within a Roman Imperial context. We will then examine the function of the Lucan hidden transcripts in order to comprehend why Luke needed to employ this literary strategy, and the various forms and functions of these hidden transcripts within the Gospel of Luke.

James C. Scott's book has exposed the abundant use of hidden transcripts within literature, history, and the politics of cultures throughout the world, and it will be used to: (1) interpret the significance of his work in the broader scheme of New Testament scholarship, (2) explain why Luke needed to use a hidden transcript, (3) document the characteristics of the Lucan public transcript, (4) illustrate the various types of political disguise found in the Lucan hidden transcript, and (5) highlight the infrapolitics of Lucan subordinate groups within the Roman Imperial context. We are then equipped to interpret Luke's Gospel in a new light-- one that broaches new territory in studies of the Gospel of Luke. The Roman authorities would likely not have discerned the "hidden transcripts," and prior to its discovery, a majority of Lucan scholars did not delve deeply into the prospect of Lucan hidden transcript and dissent traditions. Scott's theorizing about the centrality of a politics of hidden transcripts within subordinate cultures and communities transforms and enlarges our understanding of the Lucan theological purpose within the Gospel of Luke. This Honors Thesis will conclude that Luke's Gospel was not only written to defend early Christianity to the Roman authorities, but it also served to radically subvert Roman imperial dominance,

ideology, and power, and to promote an alternative counter-cultural and religious worldview in light of the life and death of Jesus the Christ within the first century.

## II. The Gospel of Luke: Author, Communities, and the Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor

### A. Author and Sources

Tradition suggests the historical Luke was a traveling physician who was not one of the original twelve disciples of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> One of the reasons we know the status of his occupation is because the author of Colossians describes Luke as: “Luke, the beloved physician” (Colossians 4:14).<sup>4</sup> The third evangelist did not witness any of the events he wrote about and, instead, gathered his information from multiple sources that attested to the events of Jesus first hand (literary sources include Mark, “L,” and “Q”). With that being said, Luke was evidently determined to write about the good news of the life and death of Jesus with great accuracy, candor, and eloquence (Luke 1:3-4).

Luke’s Gospel is believed to be the first of a two-part work; the Gospel of Luke contains information about the life and death of Jesus, and the book of the Acts of the Apostles, the sequel to the Gospel, describes the spread of the early Church after the ascension of Jesus. It is hard to pinpoint the exact date that the gospel was written, but most scholars propose that Luke was writing between 85-90 CE.<sup>5</sup> For one to truly understand the Gospel of Luke’s apologetic character, one must understand that the Gospel of Luke was

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<sup>3</sup> Paula Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ. The Origins of the New Testament Image of Jesus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 27-36; David L. Barr, *New Testament Story*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Wadsworth, 1995), 293-302; Marion L. Soards, “The Gospel According to Luke,” *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 93-95.

<sup>4</sup> Colossians 4:14.

<sup>5</sup> Soards, “The Gospel According to Luke,” 94.

written amidst the Roman persecutions of early Christians following destruction of the Second Temple.

The period of tumultuous political unrest gives a clear indication as to why Luke felt compelled to write his gospel: he wanted to show the Roman Empire that Christianity was not a threat to the Imperial cult. The Gospel can be seen as an attempt to exonerate the Christians from the relentless Roman discrimination that they were facing. This is why Luke's Gospel contains an *apologia*; however, a closer analysis of the gospel will reveal that this is only part of the function of the gospel.

Since Luke was not an eyewitness to the early events surrounding the life and death of Jesus, we must review that data about how he obtained his sources. From what scholars have deduced, Luke was reliant on other people's writings and knowledge about the life and death of Jesus. It has been calculated that roughly one fifth of Luke's Gospel can be found within Matthew's Gospel. This source of information that is shared between the two evangelists is known today as the 'Q' source. The Infancy Narrative is thought to be a derivative from this source, as the Narrative supports common Lucan themes that are seen later in the Gospel. Mark is presumed to have written his gospel first, and scholars have documented with ease the Marcan texts Luke includes.<sup>6</sup> Luke was also thought to have his own source, commonly

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 94. Turid Karlesen Seim, "The Gospel of Luke," in *Searching the Scriptures. A Feminist Commentary*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, vol. 2 (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 728-762.; H. Conzelmann and A. Lindemann, *Interpreting the New Testament. An Introduction to the Principles and Methods of N.T. Exegesis* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988), 229-236; Soards, "The Gospel According to Luke," 94.

referred to as ‘L’, as he includes many unique parables and anecdotal events about Jesus within his narrative. Put into context with the remaining gospels, Luke’s Gospel has a similar structure to Matthew’s and Mark’s narratives and, as with Matthew, Luke ensures that his audience knows that Jesus is fulfilling ancient Jewish scripture concerning the Messiah.<sup>7</sup>

## B. Lucan Community (Communities)

Luke’s Gospel contains a multitude of themes and indicators that provide clues about whom he was writing for. A close reading of the Gospel suggests that Luke was writing primarily for the following communities: the rich and the educated, the Gentiles, the Jews the poor, outcasts, and women. The evangelist essentially wrote his gospel for anyone who was willing to receive the good news, and so put forward an inclusive message.

The themes in Luke’s Gospel have an evident sense of durability, as they are prominent and recur from the Infancy Narrative to the ascension of Jesus. Some of these themes are even continued through to his second work in Acts. After reading the Gospel, there is no doubt that Luke wrote about a multitude of outcasts and recorded Jesus’ interactions with them. From this, it is deduced that outcasts compromised a notable presence within the Lucan communities. Luke makes it clear that Jesus’ message was offered to anyone who would receive it, including outcasts. In her article about outcasts in Luke’s

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<sup>7</sup> Matthew L. Skinner, *A Companion to the New Testament: The Gospel and Acts* (Texas: Baylor University Press, 2017), 171.

Gospel, Kathy McReynolds reinforces this purpose as she observes that Jesus' "disability ministry...is the very essence of the gospel."<sup>8</sup> McReynolds acknowledges Jesus' miracles, healings and interactions with the outcasts in order to bolster her argument. She further notes that Jesus' benevolence towards outcasts is exceptional in Luke's Gospel, as can be documented by a comparison with the three remaining Gospels. She writes: "No other gospel portrays Jesus' relationship to outcasts to quite the extent as Luke."<sup>9</sup> There can be no doubt the Lucan communities include the outcasts of society because his Gospel "portrays Jesus in the deepest and most intimate sense, as a friend to outcasts and sinners."<sup>10</sup>

A corollary to Luke's interest in outcasts is his concern about the very poor. The evangelist can be seen to pay special attention to "wealth and possessions"<sup>11</sup> in his parables, for example, and warns of the dangers of excess. Jesus is often seen warning others about the dangers of accumulating wealth and not putting it to good use-- giving it away to either charity or to those less fortunate. This motif is evident when looking at the unique aspects of the Lucan Gospel, as the following events about the dangers of excess are not found in the other canonical Gospels: the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13-21), the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), and the story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). These stories of the deploiment of the rich will be discussed at greater length further in the essay.

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<sup>8</sup> Kathy McReynolds, "The Gospels of Luke: A Framework for a Theology of Disability," *Christian Education Journal* 13, no.1 (Spring, 2016): 176.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>11</sup> Skinner, *A Companion to the New Testament*, 172.

In conjunction with those of a lowly status, the gospel contains an abundance of references to interactions that occur between Jesus and those on the fringes of society. Jesus willingly mixes with these people, as we are told that he is seen with tax collectors, the sick, Gentiles, and other disreputable members of society. Along with these communities, women can also be included with those who had a low status in society. There is a prevailing belief that the evangelist wrote for women, as they played a significant role in his gospel. One of the most prominent aspects of the gospel was the message that Jesus had risen from the dead. This message was received by women, and these women were entrusted with relaying this vital message to the disciples. In order to understand why this was such a momentous inclusion in the gospel, we must acknowledge that, at the time Luke was writing, “a woman’s testimony was given the same regard as that of a robber.”<sup>12</sup> Women were not regarded as credible or trustworthy citizens during the reign of the Roman regime. It was thought that Luke attempted to put women on a level playing field with men. He gives the most narrative space to women compared to the three other gospels. Morris writes: “He gives a significant place to women. In the first century women were kept very much in their place, but Luke sees them as the objects of God’s love and he writes about many of them.”<sup>13</sup> There are also unique traditions in Luke that portray women in a positive light, for example: Mary and Martha

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<sup>12</sup> Gary R. Habermas and Michael R. Lincon, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2004), 72.

<sup>13</sup> Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 44.

(Luke 10:38-42), the Healing of the Crippled Woman (Luke 13:10-17), and the Parable of the Widow and the Judge (Luke 18:1-8).

With that being said, it is imperative to acknowledge recent advancements in biblical scholarship that have notably reassessed the relationship between Luke's Gospel and the role of women within the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. It has been theorized that Luke actually sought to subordinate women. This momentous discovery was put forward by Mary Rose D'Angelo in her groundbreaking article: "Women in Luke-Acts: A Redactional View."<sup>14</sup> D'Angelo writes: "...Luke-Acts seeks to diminish the leadership of women in the Jesus movement."<sup>15</sup> D'Angelo does not seek to dismiss the fact that Luke was inclusive of women in his Gospel; however, she goes further with her perceptive observation and documents that in many instances women were: "more restricted by what is acceptable to the convention of the imperial world than are the roles of women in Mark or John."<sup>16</sup> Despite the fact that Luke writes more extensively about women than the other gospel writers, he tends to write about them in a disparaging light.

In spite of Luke's interest in a poorer demographic, Luke's Gospel is also thought to be addressed to the rich and the educated. Leon Morris observes that the scholar Martin Dibelius aptly argued that: "...the address to Theophilus presupposes that there was the

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<sup>14</sup> Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Women in Luke-Acts: A Redactional View," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 109, no. 3 (Autumn, 1990): 441-461. See especially p.442.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 442.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 442.

desire to circulate the book among the educated.”<sup>17</sup> Additionally, the dedication to Theophilus describes him as the “Most Excellent”<sup>18</sup> (Luke 1:3) which indicates that Luke was writing to an audience which may have included members of a higher status. Luke’s Gospel is also rife with references to the rich. In most instances Luke is censuring the rich and warning of the dangers of excess; however, he is actually educating the rich in how to appropriately follow and model Jesus within the Lucan communities. Without his harsh treatment of the rich, the well-to-do would presumably have had little indication of a stewardship commitment that includes others. As a result, Luke gives them the tools to understand how they should manage their money relative to the moral and social ethos of the Kingdom of God Jesus preached and modelled.

In Luke’s Gospel the reader can easily find a clear theological purpose, as it is stated in the Preface of his gospel: “I, too, decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account” (Luke 1:3).<sup>19</sup> Since the evangelist writes to a man named Theophilus, it is presumed that this character was not aware of the implications of the ministry of Jesus. Scholars have deduced that Luke was writing for an audience which was not primarily Jewish, and he sought to elucidate the ministry of Jesus to Gentiles (non-Jews). Some scholars acknowledge that, “a gentile Christ-follower wrote the Gospel primarily for other gentile believers.”<sup>20</sup> A more widely accepted opinion is that Luke wrote for both Jews

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<sup>17</sup> Morris, *Luke*, 17.

<sup>18</sup> Luke 1:3.

<sup>19</sup> Luke 1:3.

<sup>20</sup> Skinner, *A Companion to the New Testament*, 174.

and the Gentiles. This is because, “The advent of Jesus among pious Jews, who observed ancestral traditions, highlights the continuity of Jesus’ story with the history of Israel and presents it as the fulfillment of his people’s hopes.”<sup>21</sup> In his gospel, Luke makes numerous allusions to Jewish texts in the Hebrew Bible and exemplifies how Jesus fulfils them throughout the duration of his ministry. Luke wants to show that the events surrounding Jesus are taking place within the context of the traditional Jewish beliefs about the Messiah.

### C. The Roman Imperial Cult and the Jesus Movement

In order to gauge an understanding of why Luke needed to write his *apologia* and include a hidden transcript, we must first seek to understand the oppressive Roman regime and why Luke had to covertly assert his resistance. It can be said with great confidence that the Roman Empire lacked stability and, instead, was characterized by volatility. There were a number of reasons why the political condition of the empire was so explosive; it had endured rebels, false prophets, zealots, and incessant uprisings—all perceived as threats to Roman imperial hegemony. In 63 BCE the Romans conquered Palestine. The most notable places mentioned in Luke’s Gospel are Galilee and Judea which were a part of this conquered land. There was a clear structure within the government, and the principal faces of authority were the Herodian kingship and the High Priests of Jerusalem. These High Priests ran the Jewish

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<sup>21</sup> Soards, “The Gospel According to Luke,” 94. Edwin D. Freed, *The New Testament. A Critical Introduction* (New York: Wadsworth, 1986), 140-154.

Temple and were a prominent governing body over Judea, but were still subordinate to Roman rule. At the time of Jesus' trial, it was easy to see whom Luke viewed as the ruling authorities, as he mentions the Jewish authorities (High Priests), Pontius Pilate (Governor of Judea), and Herod Antipas (Governor of Galilee).<sup>22</sup> As redaction-critical studies of Luke's Gospel have shown, he will tend to blame the Jews and Jewish leaders for the death of Jesus—an anti-Judaic bias that can be easily documented by comparisons of the Gospel of Luke to the three gospels, Matthew, Luke, and John.<sup>23</sup>

The Roman Empire was very tolerant of the multitude of religious beliefs that were practiced across its great expanse. As Orlin writes: “The willingness of the Romans to incorporate new cults and foreign traditions within their religious system has become one of the most frequently noted aspects of religion in Rome.”<sup>24</sup> Roman religion was polytheistic and worshippers had to acknowledge the Roman Emperor as one of their gods: “...religion and politics were inextricably interlinked.”<sup>25</sup> As we know, from the Gospel, the Roman Emperor disapproved of both the Jesus movement and of Judaism. Originally, the Jesus movement began as a group of reformed Jews within Judaism who, over time, began to

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<sup>22</sup> Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Politics of Roman Palestine* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2014), 32-33.

<sup>23</sup> Daryl D. Schmidt, “Anti-Judaism in the Gospel of Luke,” in *Anti-Judaism and the Gospels*, ed. William R. Farmer (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, Int., 1999), 63-119.; John G. Gager, *Judaizing and Anti-Judaism in the Christian Tradition. The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes Toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (New York: Oxford, 1983), 117-133.

<sup>24</sup> Eric. M Orlin, *Foreign Cults in Rome: Creating a Roman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

separate more visibly from traditional Judaism and became a group in their own right. The members of this new distinct religious group were persecuted, as they were noticeably different from traditional Jews. This Jesus movement, like traditional Jewish groups, had a conviction of monotheism, and so they could not accept the Emperor as their god. As a result of this, Rome's normative acceptance of religious diversity was not generally extended to Judaism and the Jesus movement, because the two groups found blind conformity to Roman Imperial ideals and norms unacceptable. Not accepting the Emperor as a god, for example, was seen as a kind of blasphemy and so was considered to be treason against the Empire.<sup>26</sup>

Beyond Luke's Gospel, there is further evidence that serves to show that the Roman Empire did not tolerate the rise of early Christianity. This intolerance fueled Luke's need to write his *apologia*: he needed to compose such a narrative in order to quell the subsequent intolerance of the early Jesus movement. Tacitus (56 CE- 120 CE), a venerated historian, wrote briefly on early Christianity in the Roman Empire. He explained that Christians were relentlessly persecuted by the Emperor Nero and suffered accusations which blamed them for starting the Great Fire of Rome (64 CE). Historians theorize that the fire actually broke out as a result of a tactic that Nero employed to retaliate against the rise of Christianity. Tacitus writes:

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<sup>26</sup> Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament. History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, vol.1 (New York: Walter de Gruyter., 1995), 34-40, 197-234. One of the premier analyses of Jesus movements within the first century is provided by Richard A. Horsley. See: Richard A. Horsley, "Jesus Movements and the Renewal of Israel," in *Christian Origins. A Peoples History of Early Christianity*, vol. 1, ed. Richard Horsley (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), 23-47.

First, then, the confessed members of the sect were arrested; next, on their disclosures, vast numbers were convicted, not so much on the count of arson as for hatred of the human race. And derision accompanied their end: they were covered with wild beasts' skins and torn to death by dogs; or they were fastened on crosses, and, when daylight failed were burned to serve as lamps by night... Hence, in spite of a guilt which had earned the most exemplary punishment, there arose a sentiment of pity, due to the impression that they were being sacrificed not for the welfare of the state but to the ferocity of a single man.<sup>27</sup>

Tacitus' observations exposed the unjust persecutions that the early Christians faced throughout the large expanse of the Roman Empire. Such an aggressive response to Christianity likely accounts for why Luke was roused to include the apologetic motif in his Gospel. Clearly, the Roman authorities disapproved of Jesus and his teachings and wanted to annihilate his followers to destroy any remnants of his ministry. Luke's *apologia* was designed to prevent Christians from further suffering during this latter period of the Common Era, and it did this by demonstrating to the Roman officials that Christianity was not a threatening presence. After both Jesus' death and the fire in Rome, a disastrous war broke out. This war is commonly known today as the Roman- Jewish Wars (66-70 CE) and was a response to the Roman destruction of the Second Temple. The destruction of the Temple was such a significant event because not only was the Second Temple sacred to the Jews, but its obliteration resulted in the murder of thousands of first-century Jews. The Roman-Jewish Wars are said to have taken the form of a "messianic movement."<sup>28</sup> The Jewish historian Josephus (who supported the Roman regime) wrote throughout the latter part of the first century CE and described these wars:

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<sup>27</sup> Tacitus. *Annals: Books 13-16*, trans. John Jackson, Loeb Classical Library 322 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), 283-284.

<sup>28</sup> Horsley, *Jesus and the Politics of Roman Palestine*, 39.

The Scythopolitans behaved in the most irreverent and lawless manner of all. For when Judean aggressors from outside attacked them, they forced the Judeans living among them to take up weapons against compatriots, which is sacrilegious to us, and by joining together with those [Judeans] they overcame the attackers... But we have explained these matters more precisely in the volumes Concerning the Judean War. I recalled them here because I wanted to establish with readers that the war against the Romans was not the choice of the Judeans, but more of a necessity.<sup>29</sup>

These examples suggest to scholars that Luke needed to write his *apologia*. It was vital for Luke to prove to the Romans that the evolving Jesus movement—now inclusive of both Jews and Gentiles in 85-90 CE—was not a threat to the Roman imperial cult, and Luke did so by including a carefully crafted defense within the Gospel of Luke.

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<sup>29</sup> S.N. Mason, *Life of Josephus: Translation and Commentary*, vol. 9 (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2001), 34-36.

### III. Lucan *Apologia* as Accommodationist and Pro-Roman Propaganda in History and Interpretation

#### A. Jesus the Innocent Martyr

A major reason Luke's Gospel is thought to be an *apologia* to the Romans is based on internal evidence in his narrative. Luke's *apologia* can, for the most part, be understood using four different rubrics: (1) the portrayal of Jesus as the Innocent Martyr, (2) Luke's Anti-Judaic Bias, (3) the portrayal of Jesus as an Apolitical Leader, and (4) Luke's Pro-Roman Propaganda.

The first rubric that we will examine is Luke's characterization of Jesus as an Innocent Martyr. Throughout his gospel, Luke demonstrates to the audience that Jesus was innocent of the crimes he was accused of committing and so should not have been crucified. After reading the Gospel of Luke, the Roman audience would be left with the understanding that Jesus was an innocent man, falsely prosecuted and this would have led the Roman authorities to be less threatened by the rise of early Christianity.<sup>30</sup>

The first noticeable instance in which this rubric plays out is when Herod, a Roman authoritative figure, becomes intrigued by the rumors that circulated about Jesus' miracles. As a result of his fascination, Herod "tried to see him"<sup>31</sup> (Luke 9:9). This rather innocuous interaction distinctly contrasts with what we have previously seen from Herod, as he was

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<sup>30</sup> Don Schweitzer, "Jesus as the Suffering Christ," in *Contemporary Christologies: A Fortress Introduction*, eds. Jürgen Moltmann, Douglas John Hall, and Marilyn McCord Adams (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, 2010), 73-98.

<sup>31</sup> Luke 9:9.

once determined to kill Jesus. Earlier in his gospel Luke wrote: “At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, ‘Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you’”<sup>32</sup> (Luke 13:31). Now, we see that Herod has changed his views and is, instead, demanding to see Jesus as a source of amusement. Hans Conzelmann, the prolific New Testament scholar, puts forward the interesting point that Luke decided to include this small, seemingly insignificant event, in his narrative in order to supply an: “indirect confirmation of Jesus’ innocence from the political point of view, for to ‘see’ refers to miracles and Herod’s interest in them.”<sup>33</sup> Herod does not request the presence of Jesus to censure him or to arrest him; alternatively, Herod seems genuinely intrigued by Jesus’ miracles and wants to experience the novelty for himself.

The trial and the crucifixion narratives contain Luke’s most prolific efforts in portraying Jesus as the Innocent Martyr. This is truly the climax of Luke’s political agenda. We are first witnesses to this in Jesus’ trial before the Sanhedrin (the Jewish law courts). In this trial, Jesus is condemned for perverting the nation, instructing people to not pay taxes to Caesar and declaring himself as “the Messiah, a king”<sup>34</sup> (Luke 23:2). However, what Luke makes clear in his gospel is that Jesus neither outrightly refused to pay taxes, nor labeled himself to be a political king. The illustrations of Jesus’ trial before the chief priests was a clever tactic employed by Luke in order to “destroy any semblance of legitimacy [of Jesus’

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<sup>32</sup> Luke 13:31.

<sup>33</sup> Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1982), 139.

<sup>34</sup> Luke 23:2.

arrest and persecution].”<sup>35</sup> Luke laments the fraudulent proceedings that took place during Jesus’ trial. He recounts this event and exposes the fact that it consisted of the Jewish leaders insulting and mocking Jesus.<sup>36</sup>

When Jesus was eventually taken to Pontius Pilate to be sentenced, the governor was able to recognize the false pretenses that the Jewish authorities fabricated in a desperate attempt to prosecute Jesus. As a result, Pilate proclaimed Jesus’ innocence through the following statement: “I find no basis for an accusation against this man”<sup>37</sup> (Luke 23:4). Walaskay aptly writes: “But Pilate, Luke would like to show, could not discover enough evidence, either in the Jewish charges or in Jesus’ reply, to proceed with a criminal trial.”<sup>38</sup> Consequently, Pilate sent Jesus to Herod Antipas, who ruled under a different jurisdiction, in order to gain a second opinion on his judgement. Herod too, found no reason to apprehend Jesus and so ordered for him to be sent back to Pilate.<sup>39</sup> Herod’s declaration of Jesus’ innocence is an unexpected twist in the gospel because, again, after previously wanting to kill Jesus, Herod does not use this opportune moment to do so. Presumably, this is because he recognized Jesus’ innocence in conjunction with the unethical behavior of the Jewish authorities.<sup>40</sup> This interaction posits the idea of Luke’s Gospel as an *apologia* because not

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<sup>35</sup> Paul W. Walaskay, ‘*And So We Came to Rome*’: *The Political Perspective of St. Luke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 39.

<sup>36</sup> Luke 22:65.

<sup>37</sup> Luke 23:4.

<sup>38</sup> Walaskay, ‘*And So We Came to Rome*,’ 40.

<sup>39</sup> Luke 23:6-12.

<sup>40</sup> Alexandru Neagoe, *The Trial of the Gospel: An Apologetic Reading of Luke's Trial Narratives*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 79.

only are there two assertions of innocence from highly regarded Roman authoritative figures, this incident is unique to Luke's Gospel. Nowhere in the gospels of Matthew, Mark or John do we witness this trial before Herod. This episode stands as a further testament to Luke's apologetic agenda.

The declarations of innocence are relentless in the Lucan narrative. The evangelist notes that Pilate maintains Jesus' innocence two more times, totaling three declarations in all. When Jesus is later sent back to Pilate, the governor states: "You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and here I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death. I will therefore have him flogged and release him"<sup>41</sup> (Luke 23:14-16). Pilate reaffirms Herod's verdict, and in a final attempt to acquit Jesus of these accusations he reasserts his previous findings: "Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him"<sup>42</sup> (Luke 23:22). Through his portrayal of Pilate, Luke is anything but subtle with his apologetic agenda. The sympathy Jesus is awarded from the Roman authorities, and the fact that they could not find a single crime he had committed, would have been indicative to first-century Romans that Christianity was not a threat to the Roman imperial cult. After this third declaration of irreproachability from Pilate, it can be

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<sup>41</sup> Luke 23:14-16.

<sup>42</sup> Luke 23:22.

said with great confidence that: “For Luke, there never really was a criminal trial.”<sup>43</sup>

Likewise with the trial before Herod, the declarations made by Pilate are unique to Luke’s Gospel. In the other canonical gospels, Pilate does not declare Jesus to be innocent and is portrayed as a figure who crucified Jesus against his better judgement.

Luke informs the reader that Pilate crucified Jesus because the crowd present at the trial demanded the release of Barabbas in exchange for the arrest of Jesus. Barabbas was in prison for “insurrection and murder,”<sup>44</sup> and Luke makes this abundantly clear by mentioning this on two separate occasions (Luke 23:19 and Luke 23:25). Luke attempts to make the distinction between the innocent Jesus and the guilty Barabbas to underscore the injustices imposed on Jesus. Through the pressure from the crowd, which Pilate ultimately surrenders to, “Luke makes it perfectly clear where the real political insurgents lay.”<sup>45</sup> One can infer that, without this pressure from the crowd or the false claims fabricated from the imaginative minds of the Jewish authorities, it would have been highly unlikely that Jesus would have been crucified. This demonstrates the nature of Jesus’ mission: it was neither politically motivated nor threatening to the precarious Roman regime. In order to exonerate the Roman authorities from blame, one can understand why Luke was: “...so keen to place the weight of this conclusion on the shoulders of the Jewish leaders.”<sup>46</sup> Pilate aimed to continue the peace among the citizens of Rome and had no other way of placating the raucous crowd apart from

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<sup>43</sup> Walaskay, ‘*And So We Came to Rome*,’ 44.

<sup>44</sup> Luke 23:25.

<sup>45</sup> Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, 85.

<sup>46</sup> Neagoe, *The Trial of the Gospel*, 68.

sentencing the innocent Jesus. Luke demonstrates the apologetic nature of his gospel by ensuring that Pilate upholds Jesus' innocence.

When looking at instances of Lucan *apologia*, Jesus' question concerning the fate of the innocent is often an overlooked passage. Nevertheless, this statement is important in the portrayal of his innocence, as Jesus metaphorically laments: “‘Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us’; and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’ For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?’”<sup>47</sup> Jesus asserts his own innocence through the idea that: “if the innocent Jesus meets such a fate, then a worse fate awaits the guilty Jerusalem.”<sup>48</sup> Here, Luke craftily maintains Jesus' innocence, as Jesus is distinguishing himself from the guilty and mourns the precarious future of the innocent.

Throughout the course of the crucifixion narrative, Luke does not understate his conviction of Jesus' innocence. Luke explicitly writes that Jesus was crucified with two other men who “were criminals,”<sup>49</sup> which serves to highlight the fact that Jesus was *not* a criminal. If Jesus was guilty, Luke would not have consciously made the distinction between Jesus and the two criminals. It is easy to understand why the men who were crucified warranted the title of a ‘criminal,’ but Luke implies through this small detail that Jesus was *not* a criminal. Jesus

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<sup>47</sup> Luke 23:30-31.

<sup>48</sup> Soards, “The Gospel According to Luke,” 94. The Lucan text is based on a reinterpretation of Hosea 10:8. Luke utilizes the Hosea text to both reinforce Jesus' innocence and reiterate the Jews' responsibility for the death of Jesus. The Jewish people “fail in their support of Jesus by following their leader, the chief priests and rulers.” Jane Schaberg, “Luke.” In *Women's Bible Commentary. Expanded Edition*, eds. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon L. Ringe (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 378.

<sup>49</sup> Luke 23:32.

further establishes himself as the Innocent Martyr by asking God to forgive his persecutors, as he claims that they are unaware of the consequences of their actions.<sup>50</sup> Additionally, one of the criminals who was crucified alongside Jesus, echoes what Pilate and Herod previously concluded, and exclaims: “And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.”<sup>51</sup> The criminal had nothing to gain from saying this because he was already being sentenced to death. Luke’s inclusion of this announcement demonstrates that this criminal felt so strongly about Jesus’ wrongful death sentence that he deemed it necessary to spend his last few breaths attempting to clear Jesus’ name. This valiant announcement contrasts Jesus’ innocence with the criminal’s guilt; consequently, the reader of the *apologia* would be able to discern Jesus as an unthreatening character.

One of Luke’s final attempts to depict Jesus as the Innocent Martyr can be found directly after the death of Jesus. When Jesus eventually died on the cross, yet another Roman authoritative figure makes an assertion of his innocence. This figure was one of the Roman centurions who was present at the crucifixion, and he stated: “Certainly this man was innocent.”<sup>52</sup> This centurion, like the criminal crucified alongside Jesus, had nothing to gain by making such a daring declaration of Jesus’ innocence. The centurion saw the perverseness in Jesus’ crucifixion and so spoke out against his superiors to affirm Jesus’ innocence. Luke

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<sup>50</sup> Luke 23:34.

<sup>51</sup> Luke 23:41.

<sup>52</sup> Luke 23:47.

includes this proclamation in his gospel in order to demonstrate to the Roman authorities that even one among their ranks was witness to Jesus' innocence. This would have been reassuring to the Romans, as it would further solidify in their minds that early Christianity was not a threatening presence to the Roman Imperial Cult.

### B. Luke's Anti-Judaic Bias

By examining Luke's characterization of Jesus as the Innocent Martyr, one can comfortably attest to the pervasiveness of the Lucan apologetic agenda within the Gospel of Luke. The trial and crucifixion narratives are imperative in conveying the sentiment that Christianity was not a threat to the political stability of the Roman Empire. The second rubric that needs to be examined is Luke's Anti-Judaic bias (Christian aversions to the Jewish religion). We cannot call this bias Anti-Semitism, and so we must make the distinction between the two. Anti-Semitism has racist connotations (aversions toward the Jews as a racial group—a term popularized in 1879 during anti-Jewish campaigns in Central Europe), and was not a part of the Lucan anti-Judaic intent.<sup>53</sup> Instead, the evangelist sought to oppose Judaism and to display its officials as unjust and immoral peoples. Luke sought to portray the Jewish authorities in a negative light in order to contrast their unjust behavior with the

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<sup>53</sup> The history of the etiology and evolution of the terms, Anti-Judaic and Anti-Semitic, is extensive. See Jeanne Favret-Saada, "A Fuzzy Distinction: Anti-Judaism and Anti-Semitism," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4, no.3 (2014): 335-340. See also, David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism. The Western Tradition* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013), 48-86; F. Schweitzer and M. Perry, *Anti-Semitism: Myth and Hate from Antiquity to the Present* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan), 17-42.

behavior of the Roman authorities. The thread of Luke's *apologia* is interlaced with Anti-Judaic narratives that seek to portray the Jewish authorities as largely responsible for the death of the Jews. The Romans consequently would have no reason to fear the threat of an uprising against their regime for Jesus' death.

One of the most prominent instances of Luke's Anti-Judaic bias occurs in Luke 11:42-44 when Jesus denounces the Pharisees. Jesus exclaims: "But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and herbs of all kinds, and neglect justice and the love of God; it is these you ought to have practiced, without neglecting the others. Woe to you Pharisees! For you love to have the seat of honour in the synagogues and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces. Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without realizing it," In this quotation, Luke's Jesus censures the Jewish leaders and condemns their religious and ethical failings. Morris notes that the word 'woe' is not said with a conviction of malicious intent but, instead, Jesus uses this word to exemplify the sorrow he feels for the Pharisees. Morris suggests that: "The condemnation of the Pharisees lay, not in the fact that they tithed herbs, but that in their zeal for trifles they neglected *justice and the love of God*."<sup>54</sup> Here, the theologian observes that since the Pharisees rejected justice and God's love, they were not seen as the righteous leaders they were supposed to represent. Luke's Anti-Judaic bias is apparent because Jesus rebukes the Jewish leaders outrightly. Luke's Jesus does not censure the Roman authorities to the same degree.

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<sup>54</sup> Morris, *Luke*, 223.

Luke's Anti-Judaic bias towards the Jewish authorities is reinforced in Luke 16:14-15: "The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they ridiculed him. So he said to them, 'You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of others; but God knows your hearts; for what is prized by human beings is an abomination in the sight of God.'"<sup>55</sup> In this pericope, Jesus is seen rebuking the behavior of the Pharisees, including their immoral attitude towards money. Since Jesus does not chastise any Roman authoritative figures, Luke successfully bolstered his *apologia* in this event. He only attacks the practices of the Jews and not the Romans. Morris speaks further to the Anti-Judaic bias found in the two aforementioned verses and observes: "Jesus contrasts outward justification before people (which was all the Pharisees could attain) with the state of the heart. That *God knows your hearts...* is frightening for lovers of money. The corollary of this is what pleased the Pharisees so much...is no more than *an abomination in the sight of God.*"<sup>56</sup> Essentially, God recognized the Pharisees' lust for money and this was unacceptable behavior. Usually, in teachings about moral conduct, the individual who displays the incorrect behavior shows remorse and is offered salvation, but this does not occur in this incident with the Pharisees. The Roman authorities would have been comforted by this pericope because their conduct was not being ruthlessly attacked, so again, they had no reason to be threatened by the early Jesus movement.

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<sup>55</sup> Luke 16:14-15.

<sup>56</sup> Morris, *Luke*, 274.

The climax of the Lucan apologetic agenda against the Jewish authorities is found in the chief priests' attempts to prompt Jesus to blaspheme against Caesar over a question about the payment of taxes (Luke 20:20-25).<sup>57</sup> Toward the end of Luke's Gospel, representatives of the Jewish authorities were sent out in order to try and provoke Jesus to commit an arrestable offence. One of the men asked Jesus if he thought he should pay taxes to Caesar, as he asks, "Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?"<sup>58</sup> (Luke 20:22). This would have been an awkward and difficult situation for Jesus. The payment of taxes was something that a person did, and through this act, they indirectly worshipped the emperor as an idol. The Jewish God forbade the worshipping of idols. The most famous example of this occurred in Exodus 32:1-35.<sup>59</sup> In Exodus, worshipping an idol was considered to be a "great sin"<sup>60</sup> (Exodus 32:30), and so it is easy to understand why this question over taxes was not an easy one for Jesus to answer. If Jesus answered "No" to this question, then he would be accused of rebelling against Rome, but if he said "Yes" to this question, he would be acknowledging Caesar as the ultimate governing authority, and so disrespect God. Consequently, Jesus had to devise a response in which he would be neither disrespectful to God, nor treasonous against the state. Jesus did just this, and replied with the following answer: "Show me a

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<sup>57</sup> Luke 20:20-25.

<sup>58</sup> Luke 20:22.

<sup>59</sup> The Biblical passage of Exodus 32:1-35 tells the story of the Golden Calf, when the Israelites who were brought out of Egypt, built a Golden Calf, and worshipped it as a God. Consequently, God became angry and informed them that this was a sin because the Israelites should only worship one God. Consequently one of the Ten Commandments forbade the worship of false idols.

<sup>60</sup> Exodus 32:30.

denarius. Whose head and whose title does it bear?" They said, "The emperor's." He said to them, "Then give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's"<sup>61</sup> (Luke 20:24-25). Jesus does not exactly answer the question-- but he does not implicate himself either. He did not challenge the practice of the payment of taxes to Caesar, so the Jewish authorities did not have legitimate grounds to report him to Pilate on account of treason.

Luke's apologetic agenda in the form of his Anti-Judaic bias is undeniable. He is consistently more scathing of the Jewish authorities than he is of the Roman authorities. Luke does not shy away from the fact that the Romans ultimately persecuted and crucified Jesus, but he attempts to counteract the blame placed on the Roman authorities by highlighting the unjust behavior of the Jewish authorities throughout his narrative. With that being said, it should be noted that these three incidences of Anti-Judaic bias are found in the other canonical gospels. This does not weaken the Lucan strategy of deliberately highlighting these points within his larger apologetic agenda. Luke consciously chose to include these pericopes to get his Anti-Judaic bias across to the reader. The Lucan Anti-Judaic bias would have signaled to the Romans that since the early Jesus movement showed open dissent to the Jews, the Roman authorities would not need to feel as threatened by this movement.

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<sup>61</sup> Luke 20:24-25.

### C. Jesus the Apolitical Messiah

The third rubric that Luke uses to portray Jesus as an accommodationist to Roman imperial power suggests that Jesus was a Messiah who was not politically motivated. Luke wanted his gospel to present Jesus as a figure who solely aimed to lead a peaceful ministry. The Jews believed their Messiah would be a political figure who would free them from suffering, believed a political Messianic figure would defeat the oppressive authoritative Roman regime. The Roman authorities would have been aware of this, and perceived the Judaic Messiah to be a threat to their reign. It was imperative for Luke to relay the message that Jesus was not a political Messianic figure. Luke's Preface sets the tone for this politically-innocuous agenda at the outset (Luke 1:1-4). In Luke's preliminary comments to Theophilus, he states that his purpose is to provide Theophilus with an accurate and chronological account concerning the life and death of Jesus.<sup>62</sup> Conzelmann writes: "If we can take it that Theophilus was a Gentile, then we can see... [the apologetic purpose] in the preface."<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, this Preface lacks any indication that Luke was secretly writing his gospel in order to convert people. Therefore, in Luke's view, early Christianity could not

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<sup>62</sup> Luke 1:3. The literature regarding Jewish Messianic Expectations is extensive. See John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination. An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2016); Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties*. Hellenistic Culture and Society, vol. 31 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999); Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament: History, Cultures and Religion of the Hellenistic Age*, 197-234; John Bergsma, *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls, Revealing the Jewish Roots of Christianity* (New York: Random House, 2019), 15-30. David Stern, *Messianic Judaism: A Modern Movement with an Ancient Past (A Revision of, Messianic Jewish Manifesto)*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Clarksville, MD: Lederer Messianic Pubns, 2007); Daniel Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York: The New Press, 2012).

<sup>63</sup> Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, 138.

possibly be a threat to the Roman empire. Luke conveyed this sentiment in his succinctly articulated purpose: he wanted to inform people about the good news surrounding the life and death of Jesus.

Beyond the function of the Preface, we must look at other examples of Jesus portrayed as a peaceful and Apolitical Messiah in Luke's Gospel. Early in Jesus' ministry, Luke describes an event—scholars typically designate as the inauguration of Jesus' ministry-- where Jesus confirms himself fulfilling scriptures written in the Old Testament book of Isaiah which speaks to the character of the Messiah.<sup>64</sup> Jesus declares: “He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free...”<sup>65</sup> Jesus' confirmation of the fulfilment of this scripture suggests that Jesus' claim to be the Messiah was not politically motivated. Jesus indicates that his Messiahship was concerned with healing and bringing peace and harmony to the world.

Yet another example of Jesus as the Apolitical Messiah occurs in the Transfiguration narrative. Here, the evangelist writes that Jesus asked the disciples who other people thought he was, and Peter replied: “The Messiah of God”<sup>66</sup> (Luke 9:20).<sup>67</sup> Jesus asked the disciples to not tell anyone about this affirmation and informed them that: “The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed,

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<sup>64</sup> See Isaiah 61:1-2.

<sup>65</sup> Luke 4:18.

<sup>66</sup> Luke 9:20.

<sup>67</sup> See Transfiguration, Luke 9:28-36.

and on the third day be raised”<sup>68</sup> (Luke 9:22-23). Jesus’ claim was wildly provocative when taken in context with the uneasy political milieu of Judea and Galilee. Luke carefully constructs this interaction and displays Jesus as somewhat of a clandestine Messiah; Jesus understands the implications behind confirming himself to be the Messiah, and so does not want his disciples to circulate this news. Luke notes that even though Jesus wants to keep his title a secret, he would not be the type of political Messiah that people expected. Luke informs the reader that Jesus is aware of his future rejection and suffering, and this awareness does not give the impression that Jesus was to kickstart an uprising of political insurgency. Instead, Jesus’ prediction almost shows him in a negative light, as being a weak Messiah.

Luke’s conscious separation of Jesus from politics is presented through the characterization of both Jesus’ mission and unwavering message of benevolence. Luke carefully devised the following detail during the crucifixion to fit with the intent he had for his gospel. “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”<sup>69</sup> This cry for forgiveness is exerted by Jesus just before he dies on the cross. This exclamation provides evidence that Luke wants to highlight the notion of Jesus as the forgiving Messiah. Despite being crucified under false pretenses, Jesus still forgives his enemies. This is an important feature of the crucifixion narrative, because one could argue that if Jesus was solely politically motivated, he would not have forgiven his oppressors. If Jesus held a grudge or wanted to rebel against the Roman state, it is unlikely that he would have been as compliant

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<sup>68</sup> Luke 9:22-23.

<sup>69</sup> Luke 23:34.

or as forgiving as he was with his persecutors. Throughout the gospel, Luke prolifically chronicles Jesus' forgiving and compassionate nature. This would have signaled to the Roman officials that the Jesus movement would possess these same features. Therefore, the movement would not need to be perceived as a political threat.

One of the final and most important instances of the benevolent and apolitical nature of Jesus is found at the end of Luke's Gospel. Here, Luke informs the reader about Jesus' subsequent appearances after his death and writes in Luke 24:47: "...repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations..."<sup>70</sup> This final event is one that heavily emphasizes joy and forgiveness. Clearly, Jesus did not rise from the dead to carry out retribution or revenge towards his oppressors. On the contrary, the risen Jesus reveals that penitent sinners must be forgiven and that God's inclusive message of salvation is welcome to anyone who is willing to earn it. The ending of the gospel would have solidified in the Roman authorities' minds the conviction that there was no plausible way that Jesus could have been a political threat, because his ministry emphasized and exhibited the importance of peace. Luke ensures that his gospel would give the Roman authorities no reason to believe that Jesus' movement was going to overthrow the Roman regime.

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<sup>70</sup> Luke 24:47.

#### D. Jesus' Ministry and Pro-Roman Propaganda

Luke's apologetic agenda is furthered in his positive portrayal of the Roman imperial authoritative figures. This drastically contrasts with his Anti-Judaic bias because the Jewish authorities fail to redeem themselves, whereas the Roman authorities in Luke's Gospel either recognize their status as sinners, or are given the opportunity to atone for their sins. By examining (1) the Proclamation of John the Baptist, (2) the Centurion's Servant, (3) the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, and (4) Jesus' interaction with Zacchaeus, we will expose the Lucan *apologia* via his positive portrayal of the Roman authorities.

One of the earliest examples of the Third Evangelist's positive exhibition of the Roman authorities' image can be found in Luke's description of the Proclamation of John the Baptist. When John is seen preaching, people ask him how they can repent for their sins in order to reach salvation. Luke clearly writes about how even the most hated of people in Roman imperial society have the ability to reach salvation, and these include the official tax collectors who worked on behalf of Rome, and the Roman soldiers. Specifically, relative to the soldiers, the evangelist prescribes how they should go about their jobs, as he states in Luke 3:14: "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusations, and be satisfied with your wages."<sup>71</sup> We can see the positive portrayal of the Romans, because Luke suggests even they can reach salvation. We can contrast Luke's portrayal of the soldiers with the portrayal found in John's Gospel. John relentlessly attacks the Roman soldiers as he

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<sup>71</sup> Luke 3:14.

portrays them in a negative light, especially in his illustration of the death of Jesus. For example, John wrote in 19:2: “And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe.”<sup>72</sup> In John’s Gospel, the Roman soldiers are seen assisting in the process of Jesus’ death. In Luke’s Gospel, the Roman soldiers present during the crucifixion of Jesus are also seen mocking Jesus; however the intensity of the mockery is less virulent than in John’s Gospel. Luke acknowledges that the soldiers mocked Jesus but he does not include the crown of thorns and does not write about the soldiers in the same scathing manner that John does. One can contrast John’s portrayal of the Roman soldiers with that of Luke’s, because the Lucan narrative states that soldiers are able to reach salvation if they exemplify the right conduct. John’s Gospel does not explicitly write of a Roman official being promised salvation. Walasky bolsters the difference in treatment of Roman officials in the two gospels as he writes: “Unlike the Fourth Gospel and the book of Revelation, Luke presents the Roman military in a positive light. Officers are especially commended for their fairness and good judgement as well as their unique contribution to the dissemination of the gospel.”<sup>73</sup>

A further example of Luke’s positive portrayal is located in the story of the centurion’s servant (Luke 7:1-10).<sup>74</sup> In this narrative, the reader witnesses Jesus healing a centurion’s servant; however, it is not the *act* itself that Luke wants his audience to focus on.

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<sup>72</sup> John 19:2.

<sup>73</sup> Walaskay, ‘*And So We Came to Rome*,’ 31.

<sup>74</sup> Luke 7:1-10.

Instead, the Evangelist appears to stress the importance on of the Roman centurion's official *rank*. Luke "presented the centurion as the finest example of Roman military personnel"<sup>75</sup> and informs his audience that he was a moral and upstanding authoritative figure. Luke stresses the fact that the centurion, "valued [his slave] highly,"<sup>76</sup> and this is made clear due to the extent of the concern he shows over his sick servant. This idea of a humble Roman centurion would have been surprising to a first-century audience because it was unusual for a Roman official in this position to show concern and deference towards someone of an inferior status, especially a slave. Luke presents the Roman centurion as a modest individual and characterizes him as a well respected Roman official who modeled the ideal societal values. Paul Walaskay observes, "The Third Evangelist has emphasized three imperial virtues: friendship, respect for authority, and piety."<sup>77</sup> The centurion in this story is neither unjust nor immoral, which contrasts with the common view that they were typically unpleasant and unfavorable figures in the Jewish and Gentile populations. Luke notes that the Roman centurion was deserving of Jesus' miracles, even though the centurion himself humbly disagreed and, as a result of his model behavior, Jesus heals his servant. Luke exhibits the Roman administrative figure in a flattering light to demonstrate to the authorities that Christians would be respectful to the Roman officials who were in power.

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<sup>75</sup> Walaskay, 'And So We Came to Rome,' 34.

<sup>76</sup> Luke 7:2.

<sup>77</sup> Walaskay, 'And So We Came to Rome,' 34. The status of the enslaved was quite precarious. See, Clarice J. Martin, "The Eyes Have It. Slaves in the Communities of Christ-Believers," in *Christian Origins. A Peoples History of Early Christianity*, vol. 1, ed. Richard Horsley (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), 221-239.

This theme of favoring the Roman authorities is continued with the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:10-15).<sup>78</sup> Tax collectors were employed by Caesar and were deemed by many to be a bothersome cog in the Roman regime. They were also “notoriously hated”<sup>79</sup> by the Jews. Within this parable, the tax collector exemplifies the right behavior and is humble, whereas the Pharisee does the opposite. Luke makes his Anti-Judaic sentiment apparent when writes about Jesus preaching the following: “...for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.”<sup>80</sup> This phrase stresses the importance of being humble. Jesus explains to the crowd present at his teaching of this parable that the Roman recognized he was a sinner and so exemplified the correct behavior. By contrast, the Pharisee believed he was righteous and so, ironically, was not. Therefore, according to Jesus, within the context of this parable, the Roman official would be exalted, and the Pharisee would be humbled. Luke’s Gospel is the only narrative that contains the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. This further bolsters the idea that Luke was trying to portray the Romans in a favorable light to contrast with the Jewish authorities.’

Luke’s more favorable portrayal of Roman officials relative to Jews is furthered in the interaction that occurs between Jesus and Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was the chief tax collector and someone who was strongly hated throughout the Jewish and Gentile communities. Luke discloses to the reader that Zacchaeus was once seen repenting for his sins, which prompted

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<sup>78</sup> Luke 18:10-15.

<sup>79</sup> Kathy McReynolds, “The Gospels of Luke: A Framework for a Theology of Disability,” *Christian Education Journal* 13, no. 1 (Spring, 2016): 172.

<sup>80</sup> Luke 18:14.

Jesus to take pity on him. Luke writes in 19:8-10 that Zacchaeus said to the Lord, “Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.” Then Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.”<sup>81</sup> Jesus’ notion of inclusivity would have signaled to the Roman authorities that even they could reach salvation. It is evident that Jesus did not show any signs of enmity or contempt toward Zacchaeus, but this pericope would have shown the Roman authorities that the early Christian movement would have followed suit and so would not be a threatening presence. After a closer examination of the four canonical gospel narratives, one can see that this story can only be found in Luke’s Gospel. This isolated event surrounding a despised tax collector furthers the point that Luke was attempting to present the Roman officials as upstanding, moral citizens. Luke characterized these figures to be respectful members of society in order to emphasize the contrast between their behavior and the behavior of the unjust Jewish priests.

From this brief exegetical analysis of Luke’s Gospel, it is evident that the evangelist wrote about the life and death of Jesus with an apologetic agenda in mind. I have emphasized the need for this *apologia* and the importance of it to the persecuted early Christian movement. The Roman authorities had to be made aware of the fact that this movement was harmless and would not threaten the already precarious political regime. Despite the fact that

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<sup>81</sup> Luke 19:8-10.

the gospel employs a clear apologetic agenda, Luke had other motivations for writing his gospel. The following sections will reveal the concept of the “hidden transcript,” and how Luke wrote his *apologia* in conjunction with a politics of “hidden dissent” and resistance towards the Roman regime.

#### IV. Hidden Transcripts, Resistance, and Ideological Dissent in Sociological Perspective: James C. Scott's *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* and Biblical Scholarship

##### A. The Significance of James C. Scott's Work for Biblical Scholarship

James C. Scott's book, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*,<sup>82</sup> has had huge implications for Biblical scholarship. It has reimagined the way in which scholars approach texts such as the New Testament. In the past, Biblical studies has: "tended to ignore power relations in texts and history."<sup>83</sup> In his response to Scott's invaluable book, Richard A. Horsley observes the following:

Scott's analysis of resistance is not only innovative and insightful, but opens to view aspects of resistance that previously went unnoticed in academic investigation. In many academic fields it is common to think of social-political order and disorder in terms of simple alternatives. Either people accept and acquiesce in the established order or they protest and rebel. In the absence of rebellion, people are assumed to have been relatively content (the "happy slave"). This is the way that New Testament scholarship has tended to treat the life and times of Jesus and Paul.<sup>84</sup>

Scott has allowed us to see that there is much more to the reaction of subordinate, marginal, and disempowered peoples towards domination than subservience or rebellion. The two aforementioned actions are, for the most part, seen as the only way peasants and the lower classes have responded to domination. Scott suggests that scholars need to acknowledge the many different ways in which peasants, in and among those who have been

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<sup>82</sup> James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), 1990.

<sup>83</sup> Richard A. Horsley, "Introduction- Jesus, Paul and the "Arts of Resistance": Leaves From the Notebook of James C. Scott," in *Hidden Transcripts and the Arts of Resistance: Applying the Work of James C. Scott to Jesus and Paul*, ed. Richard A. Horsley, 1-28 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 1.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

dominated, have expressed resistance. In this way, Scott has transformed Biblical scholarship, as he has markedly enlarged and problematized the constructs of power and resistance. Horsley notes that Scott's most significant contribution to Biblical scholarship has been that he can help, "...expand the spectrum of social reality that they [the scholars] deal with,"<sup>85</sup> as well as "broaden their historical competence."<sup>86</sup>

Before we deconstruct the significance of Scott's book, we must grapple with two conceptual ideals that he bases his argument on: the "public transcript" and the "hidden transcript." The public and the hidden transcript concepts have transformed the way in which Luke's Gospel is examined. In his own words Scott explains: "If subordinate discourse in the presence of the dominant is a public transcript, I shall use the term *hidden transcript* to characterize discourse that takes place "offstage," beyond direct observation by powerholders. The hidden transcript is thus derivative in the sense that it consists of those offstage speeches, gestures, and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the public transcript."<sup>87</sup>

In essence, the public transcript is what is written or perceptively visible, and the hidden transcript is what the dominated have concealed-- in written narratives or acts--in order to subvert the dominant. Within the context of Luke's Gospel, the Gospel itself is the public transcript, and the hidden transcript is what Luke wrote that covertly resisted the

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>87</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 4-5.

Roman regime. With this distinction between the two different types of transcripts, it is difficult to see Luke's Gospel solely as an *apologia* to the Romans. This is what we will examine in the following section which covers dissent in the form of "status reversal" in the gospel. For the most part, a significant body of Luke's hidden transcripts can be found in the passages concerning status reversal. They are seemingly innocuous to the untrained eye, but after an in depth re-reading of the gospel Luke's hidden transcripts are discernable.

Scott argues that perceptive interpreters should apprehend both sides of the public transcript. He argues that we should not take the information that the public transcript provides at face value. Instead, it is the responsibility of the scholar to dive deeper into textual meanings. Horsley, in his own words, agrees with Scott's theory that at times the public transcript can be "positively misleading."<sup>88</sup> Scholarship that fails to make the distinction between the public and the hidden transcript within the context of resistance and domination falls into the error of perpetuating the false information of complete harmony and unanimity between the dominant and the dominated.<sup>89</sup> If we took Luke's Gospel at face value, we would only see subservience to the Roman authorities in the Lucan *apologia*. However, it now becomes clear that there is a hidden transcript at play that must be uncovered. Scott unearths the inaccuracies in how the public transcript is generally approached in scholarship and demonstrates the importance of the hidden transcript.

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<sup>88</sup> Horsley, *Applying the Work of James C. Scott to Jesus and Paul*, 12.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

Although Scott does not directly reference Luke's Gospel, it is easy to understand his findings within its context. Horsley notes that the 'Q' source, which is what Luke was thought to have used, "...can be seen to stem from and represent the hidden transcript of (what started as) peasant movements."<sup>90</sup> It is important to note that, "To state the possibilities bluntly: Just because Jesus does not lead an armed assault on the temple and the Roman garrison in Jerusalem does not mean that he was not engaged in a message and program of revolutionary change."<sup>91</sup> In this quotation, Horsley makes the very astute observation that just because something is not directly written down does mean that the thought is not there. For example, Luke never outrightly calls for a rebellion and does not characterize Jesus to be the face of subversion, but this does not mean that he was totally compliant with the Roman regime. As Scott writes: "...ideological resistance is disguised, muted, and veiled for safety's sake."<sup>92</sup> As we will see, Luke does just this; the third gospel writer disguises his resistance in a way in which the Roman authorities would fail to hold any suspicions of dissent.

Scott's work has transformed the way in which the analysis of texts narrating power relations between dominants and their subordinates are conducted. In particular, Scott's book can be used to revolutionize the meaning of Luke's Gospel. Prior to the understanding of the hidden transcript, Luke's Gospel was simply understood to be an *apologia* and had two primary functions: to spread the good news about the life and death of Jesus, and to show the

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>92</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 137.

Romans that Christianity was not a threat to their empire. It is strange to think of Luke as being totally obedient to the Roman regime, as Roman ethical ideals and norms contradicted those of Christianity. The insight that is gained from the public transcript and hidden transcript constructs represent a seminal key in discovering Luke's theological agenda.

## B. Voices Under Domination: Political Disguise and Strategies of Dissent

### 1. Why Luke Needed to Use a Hidden Transcript

It was crucial for Luke to use a hidden transcript in his gospel. The primary reason for this was because he needed to survive in order to document and interpret the meaning of Jesus and the spread of early Christianity. As we have noted before, the Roman Empire was politically volatile, and it was particularly threatened by Judaism and the rise of the early Jesus movement because both were monotheistic. The monotheistic tendencies of both religions did not acknowledge Caesar as a god, whereas the worship of Caesar was a requirement of Roman law. The audience that Luke was writing for had a completely different worldview from the Roman imperial cult. The Romans emphasized the importance of having values and ethics entrenched in power, and these ideas were the opposite of what Jesus preached and stood for. Luke needed to use a "hidden transcript" within his "public transcript" because he could not outrightly defy the Roman authorities due to the fact that the

Christians were viewed with some suspicion and hostility.<sup>93</sup> If Luke openly resisted the Roman regime then his attempts at spreading his Gospel would have been futile because the Romans would have quickly terminated such efforts. As a result of the Roman persecutions, Luke needed to avoid exacerbating the dire circumstances that the early Christian movement was facing while trying to spread the good news of his gospel. Consequently, Luke had to provide the early Christian movement with a hidden transcript. Luke and his followers needed to walk the fine line between survival and fidelity to the Christian gospel. Some scholars surmised that a majority of the numbers of Luke's church would likely have been marginal, outcasts and poor with "limited opportunity for upward social mobility,"<sup>94</sup> and Luke's Gospel acted as a type of "alternate reality"<sup>95</sup> with its affirmation of God's love for all of humanity through Jesus Christ. This reality was hidden away from the Romans, and so was a way in which these Christians could furtively obey God's orders and rebel against the state without facing the brutal consequences.

## 2. Scott Chapter Three: The Public Transcript as a Respectable Performance

It can be said with confidence that at face value Luke's Gospel was written to be a public transcript. The apologetic agenda would be viewed favorably by the Roman imperial

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<sup>93</sup> Alan Kreider, *The Ferment of the Early Church. The Improbably Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016); Geoffrey de Ste. Croix, Michael Whitby, and Joseph Streeter, eds. *Christian Persecution, Martyrdom, and Orthodoxy* (New York; Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>94</sup> Miller, *Rumors of Resistance*, 45.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

cult. The gospel needed to be a public transcript so it could be readily available to the public and, especially, the Roman authorities. Luke was engaged in this type of performance for survival's sake. He used the public transcript to his advantage and his *apologia* was designed to "keep certain social facts out of public sight altogether."<sup>96</sup> Luke includes Roman exemplars within these public transcripts (the Roman centurion) in order to emphasize his Gospel of inclusivity. This strategy can be used to understand what Luke was doing through his employment of *apologia* within the public transcript. Scott observes: "By controlling the public stage, the dominant can create an appearance that approximates what, ideally, they would want subordinates to see."<sup>97</sup> When looking at this idea through a different lens, we can think of Luke using his public transcript to show the Roman authorities that the early Christian movement was not a threat to society. Miller aptly notes: "...what is openly said and done in interactions between subordinates and their dominants, [is] often misleading and aimed at preserving appearances."<sup>98</sup> With his *apologia* Luke put forward his public transcript in order to preserve the appearance that he was in favor of the Roman regime and that the Jesus movement did not aim to resist it. Through Luke's disguised rhetoric, the Romans would have thought that the evangelist only aimed to inform people about the good news surrounding the life and death of Jesus -- nothing more.

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<sup>96</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 52.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>98</sup> Miller, *Rumors of Resistance*, 46.

One must also acknowledge the strategies of “advancing unanimity” the public transcript seeks to create a sense of social cohesion. Scott observes, “...it would seem that most ruling groups take great pains to foster a public image of cohesion and shared belief.”<sup>99</sup> This is precisely what Luke’s hidden transcript achieves: the outside appearance of absolute and total subordination to the ruling class through the apologetic absence of resistance. The gospel narrative appears to be in favor of Roman authority in the construction of Luke’s public transcript, but the dominant are oblivious to the extent that this transcript actually subverts their authority. This idea of unanimity is important, as: “An effective facade of cohesion thus augments the apparent power of elites, thereby presumably affecting the calculations that subordinates might make about the risks of noncompliance or defiance.”<sup>100</sup> Luke deceives the authorities and averts their attention away from concerns of resistance through the apologetic nature of his public transcript. His *apologia* is imperative for disguising the hidden transcript and deflecting suspicions of subversion.

In the eyes of the dominant, public apology and acquiescence to power by subordinates plays a vital role in maintaining their power over the powerless. Luke recognizes this and, to the Roman authorities, a certain degree of deference to Roman power seems to represent the underlying essence of his gospel. Acquiescence to power within the world of political instability is crucial because, as Scott notes, “The subordinate, who has publicly violated the norms of domination, announces by way of a public apology that he

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<sup>99</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 55.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

dissociates himself from the offense and reaffirms the rule in question.”<sup>101</sup> In order to illustrate his point, Scott provides an example from Joseph Stalin’s oppressive regime. Under Stalin’s dictatorship: “Doctrinal unanimity was so highly valued it was not enough for the party to crush dissent; the victims had to make a public display of their acceptance of the party’s judgement. Those who were unwilling to make an open confession, thereby repairing the symbolic fabric before sentencing, simply disappeared.”<sup>102</sup> It is clear to see that making an open declaration of genuine regret was imperative in order for the dominant to eliminate their insecurities of resistance and to further establish their facade of total control. Therefore, it was of the utmost importance for Luke to maintain appearances of subservience to the Roman regime. If Luke openly expressed resistance without remorse, he would be punished, the gospel would be destroyed and God’s message of good news and salvation along with the rise of early Christianity would be decimated. Lucan *apologia*, was a perfect way for Luke to express his public apology and acquiescence to Roman rule.

The reasons as to why Luke needed to exploit the duplicitous features of the hidden transcript are obvious. The Roman regime was easily provoked and in a constant state of paranoia. If Luke expressed any signs of opposition to its command, he would have almost certainly been killed. Scott notes that: “The first open statement of a hidden transcript, a declaration that breaches the etiquette of power relations, that breaks an apparently calm

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 57.

surface of silence and consent, carries the force of a symbolic declaration of war.”<sup>103</sup>

Consequently, Luke could not openly express the slightest bit of dissent without fear of retaliation in the form of severe punishment from the Roman authorities. This demonstrates one of the primary reasons as to why Luke had to employ the hidden transcript: he not only had to keep himself alive, but he also had to preserve the message and the ministry of Jesus.

### 3. Scott Chapter Six: Voices Under Domination: The Arts of Political Disguise

Under domination, subordinates used many different strategies of political disguise.

In order to express resistance without fear of punishment, political disguise was communicated in various eclectic and innovative forms. Luke’s Gospel contains a variety of narrative formations and concealed statements of dissent. In Chapter Six of his book, Scott argues the following: “My aim in this chapter is to direct attention to the manifold strategies by which subordinate groups manage to insinuate their resistance, in disguised forms, into the public transcript.”<sup>104</sup> Put simply, within these so called public transcripts, the subordinate have managed to find ways to secretly express their resistance. There are many different ways in which this resistance can and has taken form inside of the public transcript, and include the following: anonymity, euphemism, grumbling, oral culture, folktales, world-upside-down prints, etc. Political disguise is camouflaged and inserted into many different

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 136.

aspects of life, and it has the ability to unlock the creative minds of the dominated. Such forms of resistance are organized into two groups: disguising the message or disguising the messenger. It has essentially been up to the imagination of the subordinates as to what extent they could convey their resistance to their contemporaries without being subject to reproach from the dominant.<sup>105</sup>

One way in which disguise is established in the hidden transcript is by keeping the messenger anonymous. The subordinate does not want the dominant to see the hidden transcript because of the fear of retribution. Scott notes that: “If, however, it is possible to declare the hidden transcript while disguising the identity of the persons declaring it, much of the fear is dissipated.”<sup>106</sup> As a result of this, the anonymity tactic takes many different forms from gossip to anonymous violence to aggression through magic: the potential for anonymity within the hidden transcript is undeniably extensive. Despite the fact that the authenticity of Luke’s scholarship is often questioned, the writer of the gospel did not go to great lengths to disguise his identity. As will be demonstrated later in this Thesis, Luke does, in fact, employ the tactic of “disguising the messenger” in order to avoid potential harm or censure for his subtle messages of resistance.

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 140.

The alternative to disguising the messenger is to disguise the message itself. One of Scott's most intriguing examples of this type of hidden resistance is found in his analysis of the euphemism. Essentially, the euphemism relays the message, but not with the same raw or explicit execution as the original message: "an allusion to profanity without a full accomplishment of it."<sup>107</sup> The euphemism transmits the verbal insult, but, without the same conviction as the original insult. This is done because the original insult would land the subordinates in trouble with the dominant. In an effort to keep the peace with the dominant, the euphemism allows the subordinate's message of resistance to prevail due to the fact that the insult of the original message is veiled in less offensive language. The exciting feature of the euphemism is that it allows the subordinated to "continually test the linguistic boundary of what is permissible."<sup>108</sup> There are no rules or guidelines as to what will provoke the dominant, and so the euphemism, in a sense, is a game of chance to see how much one can resist the dominant without penalty.

Oral culture was, for the most part, the avenue in which the lower class expressed themselves during the first-century. Usually, reading and writing were reserved for the elite because they had access to the education and the implements to do so; the lower class did not have much choice in the way that they communicated. There are many aspects to oral traditions which makes them the "ideal vehicles for cultural resistance."<sup>109</sup> This is because of

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 160.

the way in which they are transmitted, which allows for a kind of control and anonymity that the written word does not. Control over oral culture is placed in the person who is speaking because they have reign over who hears them speak, where they speak, and the circumstances in which they speak. After the first person has spoken, this oral tradition is “irretrievably decentralized.”<sup>110</sup> Another positive feature of oral tradition is that it cannot be stopped. Written forms of dissent can be stopped as they can simply be destroyed, likewise with the tools used to create them. One aspect of oral tradition that is particularly successful is the folktale, and, more specifically, the trickster within these stories. Scott explains the immense prosperity of this form of resistance because, “Typically the trickster makes his successful way through a treacherous environment of enemies out to defeat him-- or eat him-- not by his strength but by his wit and cunning. The trickster is unable, in principle, to win any direct confrontation as he is smaller and weaker than his antagonists.”<sup>111</sup> In the context of the folktale, the subordinates would be able to identify with the trickster and would be comforted that power is not the only way to circumvent and defeat unjust domination. In some ways, one can compare Jesus to the trickster. Jesus uses his knowledge that he is the sacrifice that will counteract the sins of humanity and so save those that have faith in God’s saving abilities. Jesus’ death is the defeat of evil in itself, and in a similar way the trickster’s smarts often lead to the destruction of their enemies.

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 162.

A further tactic used in expressing dissatisfaction with being under domination of the elites is carried out by way of “symbolic inversion” through the creation of world-upside-down prints. In these prints, originating in the sixteenth century throughout Europe, “hierarchies were inverted.”<sup>112</sup> In these depictions, the underdog is always the character who carries out revenge on those of a higher status than him. The devious nature of these prints can be found in the fact that they had “no political significance whatever.”<sup>113</sup> From the point of view of those in power, the prints were harmless and rather innocuous because they depicted scenes that were not concerned with politics. For example, many of these prints conveyed messages using images of animals. If status reversal displayed depictions of ‘real life,’ then these images of subversion would have been grounds for punishment. The prints had to remain as innocuous as possible, and so echoes what we often find in Luke’s Gospel in the seemingly innocuous “symbolic inversions” he repeatedly depicts with his use of models of “status reversals” throughout the Gospel.

These examples of the ways in which political rebellion can be disguised do not begin to cover their extensive range. It is important to acknowledge these strategies of political disguise, as one can begin to understand Luke’s use of a hidden transcript in his gospel. As we will see, Luke uses many of these literary strategies in his gospel in order to express his enmity towards the Roman regime.

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 167.

#### 4. Scott Chapter Seven: The Infrapolitics of Subordinate Groups

In Chapter Seven, Scott examines, by using a term of his own, the ‘infrapolitics’ of the powerless. In order to comprehend infrapolitics within the realm of resistance and the hidden transcript, we must first understand what the term means on its own. Scott compares this type of politics to infrared light, in that: “The circumspect struggle waged daily by subordinate groups is, like infrared rays, beyond the visible end of the spectrum.”<sup>114</sup> Essentially, the infrapolitics of subordinate groups is not concerned with overt political ideology because it is an “unobtrusive realm of political struggle.”<sup>115</sup> In order for the subordinates to survive and rebel at the same time, they must adopt the principles of infrapolitics. The act of compliance and subservience to the dominant whilst rebelling in other unassuming ways is the crux of infrapolitics.

Infrapolitics is largely successful in allowing the dominated to rebel, to the extent that their urge for rebellion is fulfilled without actually having to overtly rebel and face retribution. Scott bolsters this point by using social psychology: “The safe expression of aggression in joint fantasy, rituals, or folktales yields as much, or nearly as much, satisfaction...as direct aggression against the object of frustration.”<sup>116</sup> While not actively overthrowing those in power, infrapolitics allows the powerless to be satisfied with rebellion in the form of political disguise. Ideally this theory allows the dominated to keep their

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 186.

converging ideologies, beliefs, ethics, etc. without compromising their lives. However, it must be acknowledged that this theory is not totally accurate because it “embodies a fundamental idealist fallacy.”<sup>117</sup> In order to combat this idealist stance, Scott puts forward the more realistic explanation that, “*It would be more accurate in short, to think of the hidden transcript as a condition of practical resistance than a substitute for it.*”<sup>118</sup> Infrapolitics is successful in so far as it mitigates the subordinate’s need for physical uprising, but it must be noted that it does not satisfy this urge entirely.

In the case of Luke’s Gospel, infrapolitics runs rampant. After a more nuanced reading of the gospel, one can see Lucan infrapolitics at play. His *apologia* on the exterior is innocuous and innocent and, seemingly, to the Roman authorities, there was no indication of resistance within the gospel. This is exactly what Luke wanted, the apologetic agenda was put in place to deceive the authorities into believing that he was compliant with the authoritative regime. Within the narrative of the gospel, the infrapolitics can be found most notably in the Lucan themes of status reversal. These reversals go by largely undetected by the dominant. It is hard to fathom the idea that Luke was in full agreement with the Roman imperial authorities because Scott makes the obvious point that it is hard to find someone who is “entirely submissive or entirely subordinate.”<sup>119</sup> This notion has provoked a renewed analysis of Luke’s Gospel, because “we are obliged to search for noninnocent meanings using our

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 192.

cultural knowledge.”<sup>120</sup> With his numerous uses of political disguise, it is evident that Luke was “pressing, testing, probing the boundaries of the permissible.”<sup>121</sup> As a result of this insight, and in conjunction with Scott’s findings, we gain an exciting new insight about the resistance and subversion motifs embedded in the gospel. Evidently Luke tested these boundaries of the permissible, and did so successfully as his dissent has gone unnoticed not only by scholars but, more importantly, by the Roman authorities.

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 200.

## V. The Hidden Transcripts of Dissent, Status Reversal, and Resistance to Roman Imperial Power in the Gospel of Luke

It is now possible to apply Scott's theoretical magnifying lens to Luke's deployment of a hidden transcript of dissent within the Gospel. Scott has equipped us with the tools to analyze the gospel and understand it through a new, groundbreaking perspective. Luke's hidden transcript is also most obviously and abundantly found in his narratives of status reversal. Through these exemplifications of status reversal, Luke shows his intended audience what Jesus actually preached: "God's undertaking: salvation-as-reversal."<sup>122</sup>

Status reversal can be found in different forms throughout the course of Luke's narrative. In this section the following events will be examined: (1) Mary's Magnificat, (2) the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, (3) the Parable of the Unjust Judge, (4) the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax (toll) Collector, and (5) the fundamental implications of the Passion narrative. We will discover that Jesus' ministry is, "...a ministry to all, and especially,... to those who have no claim to status, who have no claim to belonging to the group of those favored by God."<sup>123</sup> Through a careful examination of Luke's seemingly politically innocuous narratives, we will discover that some of his insertions into the gospel were secretly intended to be examples of written resistance against the ideological, political, and ethical mores of the Roman regime.

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<sup>122</sup> Joel Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 63.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 83-84.

On the surface of the Gospel, Luke's intent was unequivocally aimed at defending early Christianity to the Romans. His *apologia* was unmistakable. Beneath this clever veiling, Luke contrived his rebellious and dissident hidden transcript. If the Roman authorities discovered this hidden transcript, they would have most definitely been threatened by the early Jesus movement. Had Luke not been so clever and calculating in how he structured his gospel, the Roman authorities would have deciphered his hidden ideological, political and ethical resistance and thwarted his efforts to spread the Christian message. Fortunately for Luke, his hidden transcript remained a mystery to the authorities. After reading in between the lines of the Luke's Gospel, one can understand that "Salvation is preeminently, status reversal..."<sup>124</sup> and this concept would have enraged the Roman authorities with its promotion of an ideal of ontological, existential, and ethical justice for the marginal.

#### A. Mary's Magnificat, Luke 1:46-56

Embedded within Luke's public transcript is a hidden transcript. Motifs of dissent are most prominently seen in the narratives of status reversal. The most logical place to begin the analysis is with Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55). To put this event into context with the rest of the gospel, Mary's Magnificat occurs at the beginning of the Gospel of Luke. It takes place after an angel visits a young woman, Mary, who is told that she will give birth to God's

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 94.

child. The song commences when Mary visits another woman, Elizabeth, and, with great elation, Mary informs her about what the angel had prophesied.

And Mary said,  
 “My soul magnifies the Lord,  
 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
 for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant  
 Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;  
 for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
 and holy is his name.  
 His mercy is for those who fear him  
 from generation to generation.  
 He has shown strength with his arm;  
 he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.  
 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,  
 and lifted up the lowly;  
 he has filled the hungry with good things,  
 and sent the rich away empty.  
 He has helped his servant Israel,  
 in remembrance of his mercy,  
 according to the promise he made to our ancestors,  
 to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”  
 And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.  
 (Luke 1:46-56)

To briefly summarize the eleven verses in question, Mary rejoices at the good news that she will carry and give birth to God’s child. Immersed within this laudatory ode to God, Mary speaks about status reversal and how those who are up high will be brought low, as in Luke 1:52 she proclaims: “He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly.”<sup>125</sup> Here is where Luke’s hidden transcript commences and is evident because, “This section of the song tells of a complete reversal of human values.”<sup>126</sup> The Magnificat has been both used and analyzed throughout history as promoting a radical reversal of power

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<sup>125</sup> Luke 1:52.

<sup>126</sup> Morris, *Luke*, 85.

and fortunes, so much so that Miller has labeled it a, “favorite rallying cry of revolutionary and dissident groups throughout history.”<sup>127</sup>

Mary’s Magnificat is a hymn, and we can look at this in the context of Scott’s argument. Songs have been used countless times by the oppressed to express their discontentment with the way in which they are being treated. Songs have also been used to convey messages to other people, but mostly they are used as a type of code only decipherable to the oppressed to keep the faith and confidence that the enemy will be defeated. For example, Scott notes: “A possibly seditious folk song can... be performed in hundreds of ways: from the apparently innocuous before hostile audiences to the openly seditious before a friendly and secure audience.”<sup>128</sup>

The placement of the Magnificat in the Lucan narrative is a further subtle detail that carries an abundance of hidden connotations. Placing the Magnificat in close proximity to the birth of Jesus instead of at his death, indicates that the, “divine actions of reversal are made manifest not only in the cross and resurrection, but also in Jesus’ concrete ministry of social justice and community engagement.”<sup>129</sup> This “primacy effect”<sup>130</sup> would have set the tone for the Gospel. The issue of status reversal would have impacted the readers in the sense that it would have shaped the way they read, heard, and interpreted the gospel. The Lucan audience would have read the gospel within the context of their own social issues and matters

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<sup>127</sup> Miller, *Rumors of Resistance*, 89.

<sup>128</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 162.

<sup>129</sup> Miller, *Rumors of Resistance*, 121.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

concerning status. Further, the gospel readers would have understood Jesus' acts more clearly, as he can be seen as pragmatically fulfilling the articulated acts of profound reversal within Mary's song throughout the narrative of Luke's Gospel. As it is made clear, especially during the crucifixion and the resurrection, "Jesus becomes the central embodiment of God's reversing action as celebrated in the Magnificat."<sup>131</sup> This explains why the placement of the Magnificat at the beginning of the gospel was an imperative step taken by Luke.

The main question that we must uncover can be found in the following quotation:

"How are we to understand Luke's choosing to include a vision of God deposing rulers and upending social hierarchy in work that is supposed to be conciliatory to Rome and its culture?"<sup>132</sup> In order to gauge an understanding as to why the Romans did not see this hidden transcript as a threat, one must recognize this naivety as a result of the complex implications embedded into the intricacies of the song. The most obvious reason as to why the Magnificat failed to provoke the Romans into thinking that the song was a threat to their empire was because: "Total military defeat of the enemy is not the final goal of this song."<sup>133</sup> The Romans could not have been threatened by the text, as there were no overt signs of resistance. The obscurity of Mary's words explains why this song is such a successful part of the hidden transcript: the Magnificat lacks the tone of overt rebellious propaganda. The

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 111.

similarities in power and its hierarchy with the Roman regime would have quelled the Roman's fears of resistance.<sup>134</sup>

We must also look to the character of Mary herself. As a result of her status as a woman, and the mother of Jesus who no longer existed, Mary and her song would not have been seen as calls to rebellion. Obviously, Mary was a woman and, as we have seen before, women did not hold a lot of power in society and their testimonies did not command respect. Mary's gender, combined with the Gospel's numerous political apologetic sentiments, would have *not* led the authorities to be concerned with the status reversals in the Magnificat, because the song emanated from the mouth of a woman of a lowly status. Mary's gender also awarded her the luxury of a reduced likelihood of punishment for this type of open declaration of reversals compared to that of a man.<sup>135</sup> Since women did not generally get punished as harshly as men, it made the most logical sense for Luke to put this case of status reversal into the mouth of a woman. Luke cleverly adds a veil of anonymity to the Magnificat because, despite the fact that Mary is named, she: "enjoys protection as a character in a story set in a different place and time, rather than an actual person residing within the Lucan community who could be punished for her insubordination."<sup>136</sup> Luke's use of Mary echoes what Scott writes about the messenger and the role they can play in the hidden transcript. We

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>135</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 150.

<sup>136</sup> Miller, *Rumors of Resistance*, 117.

have already noted that if the messenger is anonymous or avoided in some way, the fear of retaliation is reduced, for the reason that there is no singular ostensible figure to blame.

#### B. The Rich Man and Lazarus, Luke 16:19-31

Luke's next most prominent illustration of status reversal is found in the Parable of the Rich Man Lazarus. The themes found in this parable are similar to those of the Magnificat because in the Rich Man and Lazarus tradition, Luke, "...bases the reversal on social justice and inequality much more than it does on piety."<sup>137</sup> We will see that many Lucan themes about social and economic justice will receive less emphasis in future parables, as piety will play a much more prominent and important role. Luke often informs the reader that people are able to reach the Kingdom of God if they are pious and respectful people. This parable is different because a man of a lower status is able to reach the Kingdom of God as he is seen as worthy, whereas the man of a higher status is not.

There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. He called out, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames." But Abraham said, "Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us." He said, "then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house- for I have five brothers-- that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment." Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 248.

prophets; they should listen to them.” He said, “No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.” He said to him, “If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.” (Luke 16:19-31)

During the first-century of the Common Era, status within the social hierarchy was everything in the Roman Empire. If a person were rich, they were valued highly and were generally considered to be a part of the elite class. Money was an indispensable tool which allowed one to prosper in society and it, “related to issues of power and privilege, and social location as an insider.”<sup>138</sup> The poor were at the opposite end of the social ladder, and as a result did not merit much respect since they were viewed to be useless and unproductive members of society.

For Luke, the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus was a way in which he could disguise his hidden transcript about the inequities of economic power. The focus of this parable is on the fate of the rich and the poor in their life after death. Lazarus, a poor man, dies, is not given a proper burial,<sup>139</sup> and yet finds himself in heaven with Abraham. When the rich man dies he finds himself in the Roman equivalent of perdition. Luke writes in 16:22-23: “The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side.”<sup>140</sup> The power of Luke’s status reversal motif is

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<sup>138</sup> Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, 82.

<sup>139</sup> Burial was incredibly important in first-century Roman society. The scale and extravagance of a burial equated with the deceased person’s status in society and, a good burial was believed to insure a good afterlife. Green provides a short commentary on the lack of burial for Lazarus in this parable: “The poor man dies and, in receiving no burial, is shamed even in death.” Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, 91.

<sup>140</sup> Luke 16:22-23.

evident almost immediately; for Lazarus is identified and named, but the rich man is not. Even though we are told that Lazarus lived a life of impoverishment, Luke still identifies him because he wants to relay the message that, contrary to popular belief, it is not his status in society that determines his importance. Luke bestows the anonymous title “the rich man” onto the character of elite status in order to show his insignificance in the structures of power in God’s Kingdom ethics inaugurated in Jesus. Luke’s hidden transcript found in the titles of both figures has further significance when one understands that the name Lazarus means ‘my God helps.’<sup>141</sup> This ploy used by Luke makes his gospel all the more compelling, because through the smallest analysis of a name, we are able to see the hidden transcript at play. The meaning behind the name Lazarus foreshadows what is to come, and indicates that a person from the subordinate class and not the elite class is seen and valued by God—a radically different existential worldview than that of Roman imperial elites who viewed figures like Lazarus as “*persona non grata*.”

With the reversal of status, Luke outlines the potential dangers of being rich by portraying its drastic consequences. From the two different treatments of the men in the afterlife it is quite clear to see that, “honor and status are valued quite differently by God than they are by humans.”<sup>142</sup> Residents in the first-century Roman Empire, would assume that the rich man would go to heaven and that the poor man would go to hell. It should be noted that not only was this man poor, he was also wrought with illness, and “dogs would come and lick

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<sup>141</sup> Miller, *Rumors of Resistance*, 217.

<sup>142</sup> Miller, *Rumors of Resistance*, 218.

his sores.” Through this parable, Luke allows us to observe that Jesus’ ministry favored the lowly, and it was these people who would be granted God’s salvation and ascend to heaven.

Joel Green reasserts this and states: “The message of Jesus is that such status markers are no longer binding. Anyone may freely receive the grace of God. Anyone may join the community of Jesus’ followers. All are welcome.”<sup>143</sup>

It is also worth noting that this parable echoes status reversal that is found in Jesus’ preaching from the Sermon on the Plain.<sup>144</sup> In the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, Abraham says to Lazarus, in Luke 16:25: “Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony.”<sup>145</sup> This theme is echoed in the Sermon on the Plain as Jesus teaches about ‘Blessings and Woes’ in the following extract:

“Blessed are you who are poor,  
for yours is the kingdom of God.  
“Blessed are you who are hungry now,  
for you will be filled.  
“Blessed are you who weep now,  
for you will laugh...  
“But woe to you who are rich,  
for you have received your consolation.  
“Woe to you who are full now,  
for you will be hungry.  
“Woe to you who are laughing now,  
for you will mourn and weep.<sup>146</sup> (Luke 6:20-21, 24-25)

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<sup>143</sup> Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, 82.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 91. The Sermon on the Plain (Luke 16:17-49) is a set of teachings from the Q source that Jesus preached after he spoke to God on a mountain and named his twelve Apostles.

<sup>145</sup> Luke 16:25.

<sup>146</sup> Luke 6:20-21, 24-25.

The Sermon on the Plain is the ideal precursor to Luke's Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus because both events are concerned with the realities of radical economic disparity and dangers of excessive wealth. The complementary events are important because the ethical values of Jesus' Sermon on the Plain are reflected in the parable at hand. Jesus' previous warnings to the poor and rich play out in the treatment of the two men in their respective experiences of the afterlife. The declension narrative of the life of the rich and powerful is Luke's hidden transcript coming to life. Since the majority of the participants in the early Christian movement were of a low status, the critique of the dire fate of the rich would have given them faith in the reversals that were to accompany God's salvation. Morris provides an apt commentary on the Blessings and Woes that Jesus speaks of and Morris' argument can also be used to explain Luke's intentions for the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus: "Together with the following woes these beatitudes make a mockery of the world's values. They exalt what the world despises and reject what the world admires."<sup>147</sup> These two events in Luke's Gospel shake the precarious ideological grounds of Roman authority and also disregard the entrenched status quo that the marginal were forced to adhere to.

Theologian Amanda Miller argues that this parable is the most extreme example of status reversal in the whole of Luke's Gospel: "The rich man is not just taken down from his high status or stripped of his excessive material privileges to create a more equal footing for the marginalized...he is condemned to separation and torment without any possible

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<sup>147</sup> Morris, *Luke*, 139.

recourse...”<sup>148</sup> Luke outlines a type of reversal that is concerned with much more than a simple leveling, the rich are not just brought low, but they are brought to a low that the poor never even reached. The hidden transcript of dissent, status reversal, and rejection of Roman imperial ideals and norms found in this parable alone is far reaching. Luke contradicts the prevailing belief that status ensured prosperity in the afterlife, and his representation of extreme status reversal, in particular, was most certainly aimed at critiquing the authorities in a way in which they would not have been able to decode.

### C. The Parable of the Unjust Judge, Luke 18:1-8

The Parable of the Unjust Judge carries an overall message which exemplifies the importance of the persistence in prayer. Luke writes of Jesus preaching about an unjust judge and a widow who relentlessly demands that she be given justice. The judge refuses multiple times, but after each refusal the widow returns to once again plead her case. Eventually her determination succeeds and she wears down the judge, who subsequently agrees to give her the justice that she deserves. Jesus speaks of God reiterating this message in that God will help those who appeal to him day and night because he rewards those who show perseverance. Luke’s parable sets the stage for the imaginative judicial drama:

Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and to not lose heart. He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Grant me justice against my opponent.’ For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, ‘Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow

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<sup>148</sup> Miller, *Rumors of Resistance*, 218.

keeps bothering me, I will grant her justices, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.” And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” (Luke 18:1-8)

From the beginning of this parable, the reader can grasp the status reversal at play with the characters. The Unjust Judge was a person who, “...neither feared God nor had respect for people”<sup>149</sup> (Luke 18:2). In the first century, Roman judges were supposed to be impartial members of the government who abided by the legal system and doled out punishment and justice in accordance with the penal system. Interestingly, this was not true for judges who were in service at the time Jesus was preaching, as Herzog informs us that: “...the concern over corrupt judges is endemic in the literature of the time.”<sup>150</sup> It was common knowledge that judges were immoral characters and the judge in the parable was no different, as he had the ability to: “use his office to line his pockets... [and this was] simply the way the system worked.”<sup>151</sup>

Luke’s presentation of the woman highlights the disparity in their status. The widow was characterized as a model of how Christians ought to behave. By contrast, the judge, who could have modeled a more ethical jurist, illustrated how one should *not* act. Herzog writes: “The judge utterly fails to perceive the consequences of his behavior on the widow. This obtuseness is the clearest indicator of his lack of shame.”<sup>152</sup> Women, as we now know, were

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<sup>149</sup> Luke 18:2.

<sup>150</sup> Herzog, *Parables as Subversive Speech*, 227.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

not regarded highly in first century Roman society because they were seen as lesser beings to men. The hierarchy in society meant that the judge and the widow were at polar opposite ends of the spectrum of social status. The woman stood no chance in winning her battle for justice and she "...was almost a symbol of helplessness. She was in no position to bribe the judge and she had no protector to put pressure on him. She was armed with nothing but the fact that right was evidently on her side (she asked for justice not vengeance) and her own persistence."<sup>153</sup> The woman was powerless against the judge and despite this adversity, she still persisted to fight for her rights.

Luke's hidden transcript of dissent, with a reject of unjust Roman power, is at play in this parable. This parable signals to the powerless that there is hope for them in the world of domination. The act of perseverance is obvious: "This reversal of roles has an amazing effect; but it is not accomplished easily or quickly, for the delusional power of the Domination System is considerable."<sup>154</sup> Luke demonstrates that with faith and perseverance, the dominated have the ability to receive justice. The widow can be compared to Scott's portrayal of the trickster in folktales because the character of the trickster does not use force or strength to establish justice; instead they use their wits and other cunning guises to achieve their intended aim. Likewise, "The refusal of the widow to accept her predestined role breaks social barriers and crosses forbidden social and gender boundaries. The result of her

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<sup>153</sup> Morris, *Luke*, 287-288.

<sup>154</sup> Herzog, *Parables as Subversive Speech*, 230.

shameless behavior is a just verdict.”<sup>155</sup> The widow had nothing to lose and everything to gain from harassing the judge, as a result of this she “managed to break the mold.”<sup>156</sup> The widow received her justice when all of the odds were against her. The woman in this parable would not have been a threatening presence against the Roman regime, as was the case with the Mary who sang the Magnificat. Both women were anonymous and of a lowly status, and these characteristics would not have been indicative of subversion or rebellion. Both Mary and the widow were able to safely engage in “facilitating open criticism.”<sup>157</sup> Luke’s hidden transcript within this parable is multifaceted.

The hidden transcript continues in a new form when the issue of salvation comes into play at the end of this parable. Jesus exclaims in Luke 18:7, “And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night?”<sup>158</sup> This would have given the early Christians hope, because: “Since even an unjust judge can sometimes do justice, much more must we expect that the righteous God will vindicate *his elect*.”<sup>159</sup> We can see that Luke is writing about how those who pray and who are obedient to God will be saved and those who do not have the faith will not. In essence, Luke is telling his followers to be persistent because this will save them, and that their oppressors will not be able to reach God’s Kingdom by reason of them not having exhibited the correct behavior. The last line of this

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 232.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 232.

<sup>157</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 140.

<sup>158</sup> Luke 18:7.

<sup>159</sup> Morris, *Luke*, 288.

parable would be hard for the untrained eye to decipher. Jesus asks in Luke 18:8, “And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”<sup>160</sup> Without the correct knowledge and context, the average Roman authoritative figure would have understood this question to be asking whether or not the Messiah would find faith on earth when the time comes for his arrival. However, the early Christian followers would have interpreted the question in this way: “He is saying that the characteristic of the world’s people at that time will not be faith. People of the world never recognize the ways of God and they will not see his vindication of his elect.”<sup>161</sup> In this parable Luke’s hidden transcript would have been almost impossible for the Roman authorities to uncover. His words of dissent and revolt are subtle, and yet give reassurance that it is the early Jesus movement and the believers in Jesus’ word who will receive salvation, and not the unjust. The seemingly righteous will not be accepted into God’s Kingdom like they thought. Luke’s politics of dissent and critique of unjust Roman power demonstrates that God sees all, and even someone who is perceived to be moral, but is not, i.e. the Unjust Judge, will not be entitled to salvation.

#### D. The Pharisee and the Tax (Toll) Collector, Luke 18:9-14

As we have seen before, the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector was a part of the Lucan apologetic agenda. However, what is interesting about this parable is that it is

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<sup>160</sup> Luke 18:8.

<sup>161</sup> Morris, *Luke*, 289.

also a part of the evangelist's hidden transcript. Luke's retelling of this parable is an obvious incidence of status reversal. This parable is often assessed as similar to the Parable of the Unjust Judge because the characters in both traditions mimic one another, and the parables are placed adjacent to one another in the Lucan narrative. In both parables, the Unjust Judge and the Pharisee were supposed to be representatives of morality and upstanding figures in their respective parables, but they ultimately proved to be the exact opposite. On the contrary, the tax collector and the widow were outcasts in society and one would expect them to be used as models of the behavior that one should *not* exhibit. Surprisingly, the figures that are used to represent the powerless are the same figures that exemplify the model behavior that Christians should follow. The parallels between these two parables will be examined in greater depth, at the latter end of this analysis.

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt. "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, 'God I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted." (Luke 18:9-14)

In order to deconstruct the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, we must re-emphasize the prevailing Roman worldview that tax collectors were strongly hated characters who were employed by the Roman regime. Herzog writes: "On them [the tax collectors] fell the full force of popular resentment toward the whole oppressive system in which they were

but minor functionaries.”<sup>162</sup> Prior to reading this parable, Luke’s audience would have understood tax collectors to be unjust and immoral members of society and understood the Pharisees as the priests of the Jewish temple who were expected to be principled leaders. Luke distorts this view and portrays quite the contrary. In this parable the Pharisee exalts himself, but will not be exalted by God, and the tax collector humbles himself, and so will be the one whom God exalts. In the minds of the Roman authorities, it would seem that the elevated status of the tax collector would represent an offense. Status reversal is apparent, but Jesus exclaims: “I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.”<sup>163</sup> In this quotation, Luke is critiquing the regime because he implies that it is not the anticipated elites who will reach the Kingdom of God, but it will actually be the humble penitent sinner.

Not only were tax collectors hated, they were also seen as unclean and impure. Jewish purity laws must be highlighted here in order to grasp the full extent of Luke’s dissent. Herzog notes: “Within the parameters of the purity codes, everything was either pure or polluted... Set within this framework, the Pharisee and the toll collector represent one more incompatible pair, the clean and the unclean.”<sup>164</sup> The notion that an unclean tax collector had a higher chance of reaching the Kingdom of God than a clean Pharisee, would have been reassuring to Luke’s dominated readers relative to their salvation. Since a lot of those who

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<sup>162</sup> Herzog, *Parables as Subversive Speech*, 180.

<sup>163</sup> Luke 18:14.

<sup>164</sup> Herzog, *Parables as Subversive Speech*, 183.

were of a lower status in society were considered to be ritually unclean (e.g. the sick, the mentally ill, people on the fringes of society, etc.), these powerless people would have celebrated their inclusion in God's salvation. When discussing the issue of the purity laws we must also acknowledge the following astute observation put forward by Herzog:

In regard to the two figures in the parable, the Pharisee is a purity figure whose prayer identifies how the debt code has been incorporated into the purity code and made a function of it. The toll collector is a "debt" figure whose plight traces to the loss of the generosity that the debt codes were intended to generate. But these figures are disguised in the parable as the clean and the unclean or the prominent Pharisee and the deviant toll collector.<sup>165</sup>

In this quotation, Herzog refers to the Pharisee's following exclamation in Luke 18:12, "I give a tenth of all my income."<sup>166</sup> The Pharisee gave his income as a part of his religious obligation stemming from a scheme that aimed to eliminate local debt from the commandments laid out in the Torah. The rich were obliged to donate a portion of their income to charity in order to ensure that the poor had the means to fund their survival.<sup>167</sup> The issue with the failure to pay these tithes was that it, "rendered one impure, and once impure, one remained forever in debt."<sup>168</sup> One can now easily follow the aforementioned quotation as Herzog asserts that the purity code and the debt code were integrated with one another. The trap-like nature of these two codes would have been common knowledge to the early Lucan audience, and so they would have scoffed at the Pharisee boasting about his insincere

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>166</sup> Luke 18:12.

<sup>167</sup> Herzog, *Parables as Subversive Speech*, 183. See Deut. 26:12 for *debt code*: "When you have finished paying all the tithe of your produce in the third year (which is the year of the tithe), giving it to the Levites, the aliens, the orphans, and the widows, so that they may eat their fill within your towns".

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 84.

generosity. The nature of the debt codes highlights the perverseness of the Pharisee's exclamations. Here, Luke's status reversal defies the purity laws and censures the immorality of certain laws that both Roman imperial authorities, and some Jewish authorities, sought to perpetuate.

The parallels that the parable in question has with the Parable of the Unjust Judge are clear. We have previously seen how the widow breaks the mold of expectations and, likewise, "the toll collector, the most shamed of the shameful, breaks the mold of expectations and changes the predicted outcome."<sup>169</sup> Instead of perpetuating the stereotype that his role is associated with, the tax collector appeals to God and repents for his sins. This is similar to the actions of the widow as she refuses to accept her role in society and shows this through her unrelenting fight for justice. In a world where social status was everything, Luke challenges the social hierarchy of the Roman imperial world through his parables of status reversal. The reasons this parable may have gone unnoticed by the authorities are similar to the reasons why the authorities did not have grounds to be threatened by the parable of the Unjust Judge. Both the Pharisee and the tax collector are unidentified characters, and if the authorities wanted to arrest them they could not physically do so, as they could not arrest fictional characters. Within the Lucan hidden transcript the messenger is clearly disguised. Additionally, there were no grounds for arrest, the tax collector did not actively subvert the regime, as he simply repented for his sins. Scott noted that: "The

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 192.

practical modes of concealment are limited only by the imaginative capacity of subordinates.”<sup>170</sup> The Lucan hidden transcript transcends the imaginative capacity that is mentioned in the former quotation. This is evident in the success of Luke’s hidden transcript as the Roman authorities took his gospel to be an *apologia* and did not suspect a further, concealed agenda.

Luke clearly challenged the presumed inferior status that tax collectors typically held. This parable is one that preaches Good News to the outcasts of society. It must be noted that this is not the only instance that Luke includes of a tax collector reaching salvation, as salvation was also awarded to a tax collector named Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus mirrored the current tax collector that we have seen in Luke 18:4-14, because Zacchaeus humbled himself, acknowledging he was a sinner. He is portrayed as saying the following to Jesus: “Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.”<sup>171</sup> Zacchaeus understood his status as a sinner and recognized that he was at fault, as did the tax collector in the parable. Joel Green observes of Zacchaeus: “This is a message of salvation-as-reversal, of status transposition, of insiders becoming outsiders, of grace for unexpected people.”<sup>172</sup> Luke uses his parables to demonstrate the notion that salvation is for those who confess their sins and humble themselves. Overall this parable has displayed itself to be a vital part of Luke’s larger agenda

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<sup>170</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 139.

<sup>171</sup> Luke 19:8.

<sup>172</sup> Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, 86.

in his hidden transcript. The fact that Luke included a person from one of the most hated classes of people in society to serve as a model in his parable was a subtle tool that conveyed his critique of Roman imperial power and ideology, particularly the idea that the elite warranted unchecked privileges and status over others. Luke aimed to convey the message that it was those who recognized their sins and ethical failings who earned their place in the Kingdom of God. The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector was a subtle oppositional tool used in Luke's Gospel. With the pro-Roman sentiment of the "public transcript" that was interlaced throughout Luke's Gospel, one may have believed that Luke was in agreement with Roman imperial ideals, but clearly, Luke's hidden transcript of status reversal and resistance to Roman imperial ideals advances a "politics of dissent and subversion" to these ideals.

#### E. The Passion Narrative, Luke

Luke's account of the Passion Narrative is the ultimate exemplification of status reversal. The death of Jesus is often thought to be symbolic of God's promised salvation and the erasure of sin. The signal of God's coming Kingdom is disguised in Luke's status reversal. The scholar Joel Green interprets this event and reveals the crux of Luke's hidden transcript. Luke's subversion of the Roman regime is located in his portrayal of the death of Jesus, as Green asserts:

Luke will interpret Jesus' resurrection and ascension as his being "raised up," his exaltation. Among the many transpositions that so characterize his Gospel, herein we

come face-to-face with what is for Luke the definitive reversal: the Righteous One..., repeatedly declared innocent by the Roman authorities..., is executed in the way reserved for those of low status, by crucifixion, only to be raised up by God. God raises up the lowly, vindicated the faithful.<sup>173</sup>

With his astute observations, Green allows the reader to recognize that status reversal can not only be found in Jesus' teachings and preachings, but also in the acts he commits.

Considering the fact that Jesus is both raised from the dead and raised to heaven, demonstrates his reversal from a humble itinerant preacher to someone who is sat at the right hand of God. In his account of the ascension to heaven, Luke remarks: "While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven."<sup>174</sup> There is a conscious effort to present Jesus rising up to heaven and to verify that the messages in his parables are coming true: the inferior subordinates are being exalted and lifted high. To conclude his argument, Green writes: "In a profoundly ironic way, the passion of Jesus is joined by his exaltation, and these together embody in an ultimate way the salvation-as-reversal theme that threads its way throughout the Gospel of Luke."<sup>175</sup> For Luke, the passion of Jesus symbolized his passion predictions coming true, his martyrdom for the sake of salvation and, most importantly, it also symbolized the Lucan status reversal motif playing out and manifesting in its most extreme form. This is in keeping with Scott's idea as he argues: "a partly sanitized ambiguous, and coded version of the hidden transcript is always present in the public discourse of subordinate groups."<sup>176</sup> The Romans would not have been

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<sup>173</sup> Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, 68.

<sup>174</sup> Luke 24:51.

<sup>175</sup> Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, 68.

<sup>176</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 19.

able to decipher this dissent in Jesus' final act of status reversal. The resurrection and ascension of Jesus exemplify Scott's argument in the sense that they were made public, but had to be interpreted to truly understand the message of subversion.

Luke brings his narrative to a close with the ascension of Jesus, and this ascension reveals that the coming Kingdom of God is for those who have not yet been exalted. Miller observes: "With his crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus becomes the central embodiment of God's reversing action as celebrated in the Magnificat, all the way back in Luke's first chapter".<sup>177</sup> Luke connects his first instance of status reversal with his last and one can compare the ascension to Mary's elation at the beginning of the gospel, she sings in Luke 1:52: "He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly".<sup>178</sup> With Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension, the powerful have been defeated, overturned, and replaced with the salvation of God's elect. Jesus, the powerless preacher has been brought high, his status as God's son has been proven and his teachings and preachings have been proven with his own status reversal. For Luke, "Jesus' entire life is a full reversal".<sup>179</sup> Luke's dissent found in his hidden transcript of reversal of status reaches its climax during the ascension of Jesus. The predictions and exemplifications found in the parables and the prophecies are confirmed in Jesus' resurrection and ascension to heaven.

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<sup>177</sup> Miller, *Rumors of Resistance*, 124.

<sup>178</sup> Luke 1:52

<sup>179</sup> Miller, *Rumors of Resistance*, 124.

## VI. Conclusion: Lucan *Apologia* on Trial: The Verdict in Light of Lucan Resistance Ethics in the Gospel's Hidden Transcripts

Tradition certifies the undeniable presence of a carefully constructed leitmotif of Lucan *apologia* –apologetic—within the Gospel of Luke. A close hermeneutical analysis of the function of this motif proves that Luke sought to convince Roman imperial authorities that the Jesus movement and early Christianity posed no political threat to the Empire. Luke's cultivation of themes focused on Jesus as “Innocent Martyr” and “Apolitical Leader” were central components of the apologetic bank of narratives and images Luke used in his “public transcript” to prove early Christianity's fair congeniality with Roman imperial ideals, mores, and values. Can the conclusion that Roman *apologia* provides a comprehensive, sufficient, and totalizing understanding of Luke's theological purposes be upheld? The conclusion of this Thesis is “No”—we must vacate (abandon) the verdict of this assessment of Lucan *apologia*. Quite the contrary: Lucan *apologia* is a pivotal construct in Luke's “public transcript,” designed to safeguard the well-being and continuity of the emerging Christian communities, **but the fuller story of the evangelists' redactional interests are found in Luke's “hidden transcripts.”**

James C. Scott's theoretical insights have provided the methodological tools to discern unequivocal evidence that allow us to see that Luke included a hidden transcript within his gospel. Five instances of status reversal clarify that these reversals are where the hidden transcript is most apparent. It is interesting to note that some of Luke's illustrations of status

reversal were also part of his *apologia*. For example, we have seen that Luke's Anti-Judaic bias is incorporated into the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. However, this parable also advances a message of dissent, because the purity laws are undermined. That Jesus preaches that an unclean tax collector will reach the Kingdom of God over the righteous Pharisee represents a counter-cultural reversal of status in the Roman world.

It is also worth noting that in the Lucan narrative of the Magnificat, the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, the Parable of the Unjust Judge, and the Parable of Pharisee and the Tax Collector, Luke protects the messengers as he disguises their identities in order to avoid reproach from the Roman leaders. As we have seen, the idea of "hiding the message" or "disguising the messenger" is one of Scott's primary arguments as to why the hidden transcript has been so successful throughout its history. Disguising the messenger was very popular within the Lucan transcript because Scott notes, "...the threat is all too ambiguous".<sup>180</sup> Consequently, the veiling of the messenger's identity would have given the authorities no one to arrest, as there was no one distinct figure who was subverting their authority. This notion is especially true when examining the Magnificat, as we have seen that the character of Mary who lived in the distant past and was also not explicitly identified and so could not have been subject to punishment.

Luke's portrayals of Jesus' resurrection and ascension are arguably the culminating events of the hidden transcript. These events prove that Jesus' teachings and preachings have

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<sup>180</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 139.

come true and, through God's actions, Jesus is the embodiment of this status reversal coming to earth. The Lucan portrayal of dissent and subversion within the gospel were: "...shifting away from more traditional ideas of destruction of one's enemies and military triumph,"<sup>181</sup> and the resurrection and ascension of Jesus proved this to be true. Through his rising from the dead and his ascension to heaven, Jesus demonstrated that the subordinates would reach the Kingdom of God through the redemptive nature of God's forgiveness. It was through this status reversal that the dominant would receive their justice. Luke's hidden transcript did not portray any military battle or open rebellion, but instead comforted readers that justice would come in the form of status reversal. Since Jesus' life was a living representation of the status reversal coming to life, Luke's readers would have understood this, and they would have patiently waited for their own reversal of status, which would have been reached on arrival in God's Kingdom.

It is undeniable that, "In a wide variety of ways the overarching theme of salvation-as-reversal is narrated repeatedly in the Third Gospel."<sup>182</sup> Luke's hidden transcript of status reversal is clearly part of his overall message of dissent towards the Roman authorities. However, *it cannot be said for certain that Luke only aimed to write either a hidden transcript or an apologia. It makes more logical sense to interpret Luke's motivations for writing his gospel as having a dual purpose: Luke aimed to write both.* Without the *apologia*, the Romans would have been threatened by the gospel and would have thwarted all

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<sup>181</sup> Miller, *Rumors of Resistance*, 125.

<sup>182</sup> Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, 90.

efforts to spread its message. Likewise, the majority of the members in the Lucan communities may have been persecuted by the same Romans that Luke wrote his *apologia* for, consequently; Luke needed to devise his hidden transcript in order for these Christians to endure and persevere through the persecutions. The Lucan infrapolitics that was at play within his hidden transcripts was designed to prevent active rebellion among community members, because his exemplifications of status reversal fulfilled Scott's findings, which suggested that, "Allowing subordinate groups to play at rebellion within specified rules and times helps prevent more dangerous forms of aggression."<sup>183</sup> Luke suppressed the desire for outright rebellion through his hidden transcript of status reversal because he knew that the Roman authorities were too powerful to be defeated by a peasant rebellion. The early Jesus movement needed confidence in God's saving power as well as comfort in knowing that their oppressors would be punished for their unjust acts towards the early Christians: Luke achieved both of these aims by writing his gospel as an *apologia* to the Roman authorities **with** a hidden transcript for the early Jesus movement.

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<sup>183</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 185.

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