

**DIVINE WRATH AS ROMAN HISTORIOGRAPHY  
AND LUKAN REDACTION**

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**Introduction**

The language of divine wrath is a fascinating study in Greek and Roman literature. This Greco-Roman background provides context for exegesis of New Testament texts that reflect this language. In Greek literature the language of divine wrath consists of the primary word group (ὀργή, θυμός), their corollaries in synonymous secondary terms that did not much outlive the classical period (i.e., κότος, μῆνις, χόλος), and those contexts in which divine wrath is implicit. In Roman literature the language of divine wrath would be contexts surrounding the use of *ira deum*.<sup>1</sup>

Eventually, any significant distinctions between ὀργή and θυμός faded by the New Testament period.<sup>2</sup> Further, use of θυμός in the New Testament ascribed to deity is almost exclusive to the book of Revelation (except Rom. 2:8). While Paul may have the lion's share of the usage of ὀργή in the New Testament, this paper intends to show that Luke himself uses ὀργή with literary and theological significance when viewed through the refractive lens of the Roman historians.

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<sup>1</sup>In the following discussion, *ira deum* is associated with ὀργή θεοῦ; see Carl Darling Buck, *A Dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages: A Contribution to the History of Ideas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 1134–37.

<sup>2</sup>One cognate verb form from the secondary (classical) terms survives in John 7:23 (χολᾶτε). For a concordance of New Testament occurrences of ὀργή and θυμός, see Appendix 1.

## **Divine Wrath as Roman Historiography**

### *Roman Myth and Philosophy*

#### Roman Myth

A long-rehearsed truism is that Roman writers adopted and adapted the heritage of Greek myth.<sup>3</sup> While native Italian myths succumbed to Greek legends, Roman mythology is more than a simple extension of Greek mythology. Roman mythology has deep roots in pre-Roman Italic tribes such as the Sabines and the Etruscans.<sup>4</sup> Even so, Roman writers evidence the use of the concept of divine wrath as an interpretive device for explicating events in human affairs.<sup>5</sup> Thus, for example, Rome achieved her greatness in part due to her success in not provoking divine wrath; one could say Rome had a "leg up" due to the early favor granted by the gods.<sup>6</sup> Bad events and tragic outcomes were the consequence of humans getting entangled in the unpredictable, irrational passions of the gods.

#### Roman Philosophy

Greek philosophers saw the Greek myths as thoroughly inadequate interpretations of human existence. Especially off base was the use of any construct of divine wrath resulting from gods overtaken by irrational passion. Life in that case was essentially without dependable purpose or verifiable destiny.<sup>7</sup>

The necessary point for this paper is that Roman writers reflected this Greek philosophical criticism against using the concept of divine wrath as an interpretive structure for life. In the time of Nero, Petronius composed his pungent satire on the wrath of the Homeric gods through a parody involving the wrath of the phallic god Priapus.<sup>8</sup> Cicero's Epicurean spokesman Velleius reviewed the theology of the poets, in which the gods were represented as "inflamed by anger and maddened by lust," and proclaimed,

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<sup>3</sup>Cicero *Tusculan Disputations* 4.1.

<sup>4</sup>See Mark P. O. Morford and Robert J. Lenardon, *Classical Mythology* (New York: David McKay Co., 1971), 395–96.

<sup>5</sup>Virgil *Aeneid* 7.285–316. Cf. Tacitus *Annals* 3.61; Lucretius *De Rerum Natura* 5.399–401; Cicero *Tusculan Disputations* 4.29.

<sup>6</sup>Livy 1.9.

<sup>7</sup>Diogenes Laertius *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 7.110–11, 119; 10.139; Epicurus *Letter to Menoecus* 123–24(a). Cf. Plutarch *On Moral Virtue* 441C, 441D, 446F, 447B, 450C.

<sup>8</sup>Petronius *Satyricon* 126–41.

"Anyone pondering on the baseless and irrational character of these doctrines ought to regard Epicurus with reverence, and to rank him as one of the very gods about whom we are inquiring."<sup>9</sup> Lucretius also diligently espoused Epicurean philosophy, which downplayed using divine wrath as an interpretive strategy for life events.<sup>10</sup>

Another Greek philosophy, Stoicism, had its vigorous Roman exponents as well.<sup>11</sup> The second book of Cicero's *De Natura Deorum* contains the main doctrines of Stoicism, a philosophy Cicero championed.<sup>12</sup> Other notable proponents of Stoicism included Seneca<sup>13</sup>, and later, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus.<sup>14</sup> Such Roman writers reflected the reservations of Greek Stoic philosophers in ascribing passions such as wrath to deity. One area of Roman thought, however, continued the tradition of using divine wrath as an interpretive tool for significant life events: the Roman historians.

### *Roman History*

#### Ancestral Religion

The evidence from Roman historians is that the roots of the Roman attitude toward divine wrath lay within their own ancestral Roman religion. According to Cicero, the elements of this religion were: (1) rituals—ceremonies traditionally tied to the ancient Roman cultus, (2) auspices—protection secured through patronage of certain deities, and (3) auguries—prophetic warnings from oracles, omens, dreams, prodigies, and the *haruspex*.<sup>15</sup> The concept of *ira deum* was integral to this ancient Roman cultus. The

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<sup>9</sup>Cicero *De Natura Deorum* 1.16. Cicero himself was adamantly against Epicurean philosophy; cf. *Tusculan Disputations* 5.27.28; 4.3.6; *De Officiis* 3.116–20.

<sup>10</sup>Lucretius *De Rerum Natura* 1.58–89; 2.645–46, 651; 5.1194–96; 6.51–53, 70–72, 753–54.

<sup>11</sup>A source book for primary material on the Stoics is *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, ed. Hans F. A. von Arnim (Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 1964). Zeno's doctrine was outlined in Cicero *Pro Murena* 29.

<sup>12</sup>Cicero *De Natura Deorum* 3.40; *De Officiis* 3.102.

<sup>13</sup>Seneca *On Obedience to the Universal Will* (Epistle 107) 10–12; *On Self Control* (Epistle 116) 6–8, in *Ad Lucillum Epistulae Morales*.

<sup>14</sup>Marcus Aurelius Antoninus *Communings with Himself* 5.27–28; 10.30; 11.8.

<sup>15</sup>*De Natura Deorum* 3.2. Cf. Marcus Minucius Felix *Octavius* 7. The basic presentation on Roman historians by Kleinknecht (TDNT 5:389–92) has been substantiated by this writer and followed in this paper.

expiatory rites of Roman religion were necessary to avert the wrath of the gods.<sup>16</sup> Cultic legends preserved by the historians manifest this assumed nexus of relationship between *ira deum* and the ancient cult.<sup>17</sup>

### State/Governmental Welfare

The driving force energizing the nexus was the quest to secure the continued welfare of both the state and the government. This welfare was grounded in the *religio* of the ancient cultus and disrupted by the associated *ira deum*. This interpretive nexus is given many voices in the explanations of Roman historians: the wrath of the gods was responsible for the mutinous behavior of soldiers (Tacitus *Annals* 1.39); the force impelling factions into civil war (Tacitus *Histories* 2.38); the expanding evils of Nero's reign (*Annals* 16.16); the destruction of Corinth and Carthage (Cicero *De Natura Deorum* 3.38); the successes of Hannibal (*Livy* 22.9); the rise of Sejanus (*Annals* 4.1); the Roman carnage at Cannae (*Livy* 25.6); the defeat of the legions of Quintilius Varus by the Germans (*Dio's Roman History* 56.23.1; 24.1–5); and the reduction of the Capitol to ruins (*Histories* 4.54). Expiating the divine wrath, then, was not simply a private affair only for some individual. Appeasing the gods was a serious affair of state security.

### Expiatory Devotion to Death

The highest Roman expression of the expiation of divine wrath was the cultic-military rite of devotion to death in order to vitiate impending divine wrath. In 340 B.C.E., the consul Decius so devoted himself. In this way, according to Livy, Decius turned aside the divine wrath from the Roman legions to his own person and to the enemy troops whom he had dedicated with himself. The Romans, witnessing their comrade expiating the divine wrath, renewed the attack in fresh vigor, their spirits relieved of religious fears.<sup>18</sup>

### Transforming Myth

Thus, as an interpretive strategy, Roman historians amplified the role of divine wrath in destiny already present in Greek literature. At the same time, these Roman writers also transformed the typical mythological role for divine wrath as an irrational force. Roman writers tamed divine wrath into a rational construct to explain human affairs. They domesticated divine wrath by constituting this force as one of the forces of destiny

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<sup>16</sup>*Livy* 5.14; 8.9; 9.29; 22.9; 27.23.

<sup>17</sup>E.g., Tacitus *Annals* 14.22; *Livy* 2.36.

<sup>18</sup>*Livy* 8.9.

(*fatum*). Roman writers linked *ira deum* and *fatum* into mutual operations.<sup>19</sup> The lives of humans were fitted into these patterns of fate with their intended goals. To resist the destiny expressed through the wrath of the gods was futile. The very existence of the Roman state was tied to the destiny produced by divine wrath.<sup>20</sup> Even acts of insanity did not lie outside the bounds of destiny, being identified with the wrath from heaven. The wise man heeded the direction of the divine wrath. For this reason, Rome avoided provoking the wrath of any deity.<sup>21</sup> According to Minucius Felix, Roman attitude toward *ira deum* produced acceptance of numerous cults throughout Roman history.<sup>22</sup>

Could this destiny dictated by the divine wrath be known in advance? Yes. Destiny was revealed through the prodigies. Prodigies could be ignored, but not falsified. Various marvels pointing to inevitable fate precluded major events, such as the death of an emperor or the defeat of a general. Access to the Sibylline Oracles helped to ascertain the future irrevocably decreed by *fatum*. This access was given by the office of *pontifex maximus* of Rome. Emperors sought this office. However, the office functioned also as a means of consolidating political power. Apparently, the Roman people inclined toward considering every abnormal occurrence as a prodigy of *ira deum* and *fatum*. Roman historians sought to check ill-advised designations of events as prodigies. Otherwise, Roman historians systematically used *ira deum* as a vehicle for historical interpretation.<sup>23</sup>

### Summary

Roman writers reflected their Greek mythological and philosophical backgrounds regarding the use of divine wrath as a literary interpretive device. In Greek and Roman myth, divine wrath was that irrational, impulsive, unpredictable component of divine relationships that caused havoc on Mount Olympus and chaos among humans. When

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<sup>19</sup>Livy 25.6; Tacitus *Histories* 4.26.

<sup>20</sup>Tacitus *Annals* 16.16. Cf. Polybius *Histories* 1.4; Virgil *Aeneid* 1.2–4; 5.784; 8.50–58.

<sup>21</sup>For the above, see Tacitus *Histories* 2.38; Livy 2.36; Suetonius *Caesar Augustus* 93.

<sup>22</sup>Minucius Felix Octavius 7.2. Cf. Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 14.4.4; 16.2.3; *Josephus: Complete Works*, trans. William Whiston, foreword by William Sanford Lasor (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1977). References to Josephus in two divisions will be to the Loeb Library edition, while references in three divisions will be to the Whiston translation.

<sup>23</sup>For the above paragraph, see Suetonius *Galba* 18 (Plutarch *Cicero* 1.2); Suetonius *Claudius* 46; Tacitus *Annals* 12.43 (Plutarch *Caesar* 69.3); Suetonius *Augustus* 92; Tacitus *Annals* 13.17; Polybius *Histories* 4.26. Some prodigies were positive; cf. Polybius *Histories* 4.81. Omens were even more a matter of personal interpretation; cf. the omens Augustus regarded as infallible in Suetonius *Augustus* 92.

relating divine wrath to the future, one had no idea where all this was going. In Greek and Roman philosophy, use of divine wrath as an interpretive device for life was downplayed or even satirized; the bottom line for predicting human events was still the same: one still had no idea where all this was going.

One distinctive contribution, however, to using the concept of divine wrath as an interpretive literary strategy was among the Roman historians. These historians consistently used divine wrath for historical interpretive purposes in writing the history of Rome. Their interpretive strategy was to link the concept of *fatum* with the concept of *ira deum* derived from the ancient Roman cultus. As a result, when reading a Roman historian, one was given a keen idea of exactly where all this was going. Wrath was domesticated into a rational construct interpreting human or state destiny.

### Divine Wrath as Lukan Redaction

#### *Luke 3:7*

The explicit introduction of the language of divine wrath in the Jesus traditions reflected in the four Gospels is based upon the judgment preaching of John the Baptist.<sup>24</sup> How Luke appropriated John's message is answered variously. The spectrum is broad, but falls into three main categories. One is complete historicizing. Bovon's approach here is typical: "John's words of warning have become, by Luke's time, a sentence passed: the 'wrath' is now inevitable . . ."; Bovon is alluding to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.<sup>25</sup> On the other end of the spectrum is Fitzmyer, who is certain that 3:7 and 21:23 "are both future manifestation."<sup>26</sup> Fitzmyer went on to assert, "Since 'God's wrath' is of little interest to Luke, we never learn in his writings what evokes it; . . ."<sup>27</sup> Finally, a third main

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<sup>24</sup>Matt. 3:7; 14:2; Mark 1:14–15; Luke 7:20–22; John 1:20–23.

<sup>25</sup>François Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1–9:50* in *Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*, eds. Helmut Koester, et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 122.

<sup>26</sup>Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I–IX): Introduction, Translation, and Notes* in *The Anchor Bible* vols. 28–28a, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1970, 1985), 468. In fact, Fitzmyer's later comments seem to contradict this futurist exegesis for both 3:7 and 21:23. In commenting on 21:23, Fitzmyer stated that Luke knew he would be understood [as the A.D. 70 fall of Jerusalem], "since he writes after the event," *Luke (X–XXIV)*, 1344.

<sup>27</sup>Surely Luke 19:41–44 falsifies Fitzmyer's assertion here! Cf. Green, who also concluded that 21:20–24 draws on Jesus' words in 19:43–44, that is, Luke tied the divine judgment of 21:20–24 directly to Israel's refusal to repent in 19: 43–44 when confronted by Jesus' own ministry; Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, gen. eds. Ned B. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce, and

category is a mediating view, such as Plummer, who chose a conflated answer of *both* the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem *and* penalties inflicted on the Last Day.<sup>28</sup>

So, exactly how was John the Baptist's judgment preaching understood by Luke? The answer can be perceived through the manner in which Luke treated two related Jesus traditions: Jesus' sermon at Nazareth and his later prediction of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, *when combined narratively in the context of two motifs of Roman historians*. Our redactional clues are the manner of Luke's citation of Isa. 61:1–2a (and 58:6) by Jesus in the inaugural sermon at Nazareth (4:18–19) and the only other occurrence of ὀργή in his Gospel in 21:23, which, like the material in 3:7, is in an eschatological context, but, more importantly, has obvious Lukan redaction.

The eschatological context of the use of ὀργή in 3:7 is set by the immediately preceding quote from Isaiah in 3:4–6. Of Luke's use of this passage, Tannehill wrote:

The importance of this quotation to the narrator is shown by the anticipations of it in the birth narrative. The importance of the last line is shown by the fact that Luke alone continues the quote to include it, while Matthew and Mark end with "make straight his paths." This quotation from Isaiah not only interprets John's special mission but reveals the purpose of God which underlies the whole narrative of Luke-Acts.<sup>29</sup>

Within this eschatological context and paradigmatic episode, John challenged those who came for his baptism: "Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?" (τίς ὑπέδειξεν ὑμῖν φυγεῖν ἀπὸ τῆς μελλούσης ὀργῆς;). The term ὀργή in this eschatological context takes on the nuance of the future judgment of God.<sup>30</sup> Thus, John's baptism was

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Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 738. Luke, in fact, more likely had a literary purpose in how he configured the language of wrath in his Gospel.

<sup>28</sup>Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Luke*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., in *The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments*, eds. Alfred Plummer, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs (Edinburgh: T & T Clark; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), 89.

<sup>29</sup>Robert C. Tannehill, *Volume One: The Gospel According to Luke in The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 47.

<sup>30</sup>J. Reiling and J. L. Swellengrebel, *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of Luke in Helps for Translators*, Vol. 10 (Leiden: E. J. Brill for the United Bible Societies, 1971), 164, 670. Also common in commentaries; cf. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke in Sacra Pagina*, vol. 3, ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 64; I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* in *The New International Greek Text Commentary*, eds. I Howard Marshall and W.

repentance in preparation for the final judgment *of Israel*, which Luke made clear by having John address the crowds generally and not specifically the Pharisees and Sadducees, as in Matt. 3:7.<sup>31</sup>

*Luke 4:18–19*

In Jesus' synagogue sermon, the future year of the Lord that had been announced in ancient prophecy was declared fulfilled in the preaching and healing ministry of Jesus. Well-recognized is that this declaration has eschatological implications. What those implications are is argued.<sup>32</sup> The pertinent point is that the context is eschatological. This context means a judgment theme necessarily is inferred. That is, though the explicit language of wrath is not present, implicit language is. This implicit language allows Luke to develop a literary strategy using a latent wrath theme in Jesus' message in 4:18–19 that Luke will unpack later in 21:20–24.

Luke presented Jesus as announcing the favorable "year of the Lord" through a citation of the prophet Isaiah. Eschatological fulfillment is imminent in the reality that Jesus' ministry represents. Luke, however, omitted from the last half of the second verse of the prophetic citation the words "and the day of vengeance [ἐκδικήσις] of our God." These words encode the judgment theme of eschatological fulfillment. Goulder said the omission was "to keep the atmosphere positive," but surely more than this is involved!<sup>33</sup>

Fitzmyer pointed out that two phrases actually are omitted: one from Isa. 61:1c, "to heal the brokenhearted," and the other from Isa. 61:2b, "the day of vengeance of our God." Fitzmyer then commented, "The omission of the former is of little consequence; but the latter is a deliberate suppression of the negative aspect of the Deutero-Isaian

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Ward Gasque (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1978), 139; Green, *Luke*, 175; Plummer, *S. Luke*, 89, Fitzmyer, *Luke (I–IX)*, 464.

<sup>31</sup>Also noted by Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 464.

<sup>32</sup>One major issue is how to periodize eschatological time. Periodization of the ministry of Jesus ultimately is indebted to Hans Conzelmann, whose three-stage thesis of Israel, Jesus, and the Church (more obvious in the original German title, *Die Mit Der Zeit*) eventually succumbed to a more popular bipartite counterproposal; Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, trans. Geoffrey Buswell (New York: Harper and Row, 1960). For a bibliography of the bipartite view, see Gregory E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephus, Luke-Acts and Apologetic Historiography* in Supplements to Novum Testamentum, vol. 64 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), 361 n. 260.

<sup>33</sup>Michael D. Goulder, *Luke: A New Paradigm* in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, Supplement Series, ed. Stanley Porter, vol. 20 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989, reprint 1994), 302.



message."<sup>34</sup> This analysis is partly correct, but not if the suggestion is that Luke never used or developed this "negative aspect" of the Deutero-Isaian theme. The only other occurrence of ὀργή in Luke's Gospel is the key. Through this second omission in 4:18–19 ("the day of vengeance of our God"), Luke probably was providing exegesis of the prophetic material in the context of the ministry of Jesus by structuring the wording to anticipate 21:20–24. While derived from a different focus, Lindemann's argument is similarly based:

Das Zitat nach LXX ist im Wortlaut fast korrekt: Zwar ist aus Jes 61,1 die Zeile ἰάσασθαι τοὺς συντετριμμένους τῆ καρδία entfallen, und als vorletzte Zeile ist ein (leicht variiertes) Satz aus Jes 58,6 eingefügt, bevor das Zitat mit Jes 61,2a abgeschlossen wird; aber Lukas setzt durch die Art seiner Darstellung voraus, dass jedenfalls die Leser annehmen sollen, es handele sich bei dem verlesenen Prophetenwort wirklich um eine Textstelle und nicht um ein Mischzitat, das Jesus in dieser Form gar nicht hätte finden können.<sup>35</sup>

Bovon is tantalizing close to our view in noting that the concept, "day of vengeance," in Luke's context "would have been inappropriate."<sup>36</sup> Bovon, however, made no attempt to explain exactly why. While we find ourselves in agreement conceptually with Bovon, our point will be to suggest Luke's literary why.

#### *Luke 21:20–24*

Two literary motifs surrounding the use of the language of divine wrath in Roman historians surface in Luke's redaction of the eschatological material in chapter 21 and provide the background for the specific manner in which Luke handled the theme of divine wrath in the preaching of John the Baptist. One motif is divine wrath setting the parameters of national destiny. The other motif is the expiation of divine wrath through vicarious self-sacrifice of a state representative on behalf of the state.

#### Divine Wrath as National Destiny

That Luke in 4:18–19 intentionally omitted the vengeance motif from the Isaianic quote is seen when Luke's John the Baptist passage is compared with the oracle on

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<sup>34</sup>Fitzmyer, *Luke (I–IX)*, 532. In contrast, Marshall tended to the view of simple assimilation to the LXX (*Luke*, 182), as did Plummer earlier (*S. Luke*, 120).

<sup>35</sup>Andreas Lindemann, "Einheit und Vielfalt im Lukanischen Doppelwerk: Beobachtungen zu Reden, Wundererzählungen und Mahlberichten" in *The Unity of Luke-Acts*, ed. Joseph Verheyden in series Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium, vol. 142 (Leuven: University Press, 1999), 229.

<sup>36</sup>Bovon, *Luke 1*, 153.

Jerusalem later in the Gospel in chapter 21. Divine vengeance plays a decided role in this oracle. Apparently for Luke, the ministry of Jesus could not be characterized by the vengeance motif from Isaiah. On the other hand, at the conclusion of Jesus' ministry in the prophetic oracle concerning Jerusalem, Luke produced a significant collocation of terms. That is to say, after Luke reported how John the Baptist announced a "coming wrath," Luke did not use the term ὀργή again in his Gospel *until the Jerusalem oracle delivered by Jesus*. Luke probably meant for his readers to mark the beginning and the end of Jesus' ministry by utilizing the language of divine wrath like linguistic bookends.<sup>37</sup>

Between John the Baptist's judgment oracle and Jesus' Jerusalem oracle, Isaiah's "day of vengeance" did not characterize the ministry of Jesus for Luke. Jesus' ministry was, in contrast, beneficent. Jesus' beneficent ministry meant that John's preaching of judgment wrath, which was the prelude to Jesus' own ministry in all the gospel traditions, Luke left in suspended animation. The outstanding eschatological issue of divine wrath that John the Baptist preached Luke resolved in 21:20–24. In this eschatological section near the end of the Gospel, Luke said that when Jerusalem was surrounded by armies, the city's inhabitants would have to flee to the mountains. This flight motif in the Jerusalem oracle is an intratextual echo of the question of the Baptist earlier in the Gospel: "Who has warned you to flee from the coming wrath?" (3:7).<sup>38</sup> With this intratextual echo Luke interpreted Israel's rejection of the messiah as altering the year of the Lord's favor at the beginning of Jesus' ministry into the self-inflicted day of vengeance at the end (cf. ἐκδικήσεως, 21:22).<sup>39</sup> In this way, the ominous warning of the Baptist would discover an

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<sup>37</sup>Marshall noted that ὀργή was not a Lukan word, such that this rare term's appearance in 3:7 and 21:23 suggests that Luke was "following a source" (*Luke*, 773). A source-critical analysis, however, does not go far enough to explore Luke's own *literary purpose* for the use of ὀργή. Luke used divine wrath language to place linguistic bookends on the public ministry of Jesus. This literary strategy finds its context against the common use of divine wrath as a literary motif in Roman historians. Luke's use of a word-theme bracket does not infer that the word-theme itself must be frequent in that unit: the explicit language of divine wrath in the Gospel is exclusive to the bracketing verses (3:7; 21:23). We have a parallel in the construction of Acts. Overall, kingdom of God language is rare in the Acts text. However, the kingdom theme prominently and explicitly is featured at the beginning and at the end of the Acts narrative (1:6; 28:31).

<sup>38</sup>The flight motif is part of the triple tradition (Mark 13:14; Matt. 24:16; Luke 21:21). Luke, however, is the only gospel writer to preface the use of the flight motif with Jesus' own lamentation over the city of Jerusalem (19:41–44), which provides the reader Luke's own distinctive perspective on the motif. Also, see note 40 below.

<sup>39</sup>Green noted that "days of vengeance" is a common scriptural motif for divine judgment, *Luke*, 739.

ironic fulfillment: in Jerusalem's desolation, divine judgment finally would come (21:20). At last would come "wrath [ὀργή] to this people" (21:23).<sup>40</sup>

Thus, for Luke, Israel's rejection of Jesus would actuate the latent wrath of God against Israel.<sup>41</sup> In this way, Luke historicized the imminent eschatological judgment in the preaching of John the Baptist as the destruction of Jerusalem.<sup>42</sup> That much is clear; but does Luke intend to exhaust the meaning of John the Baptist's language of wrath in the events of A.D. 70? The answer is no if Luke is following the literary strategies of the Roman historians. That is, Luke's historicizing approach seems patterned on the religious use of *ira deum* by Roman historians as a vehicle for rational, historical interpretation related to destiny (*fatum*). The very existence of the Roman state for Roman historians was tied to the destiny produced by divine wrath. Luke's application of ὀργή tied the existence of the Jewish state to the destiny produced by divine wrath. Thus, A.D. 70 is God's wrath on Israel; however, A.D. 70 is not the last word. Her fate (*fatum*) is not finished. Luke is able to take advantage of a second Roman motif as well, and this motif leaves the future open for Israel.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>The four Lukan passages focused on Jerusalem's destiny are 13:33–35; 19:41–44; 21:20–24; and 23:27–31. Each of the other three passages enhances or even amplifies the points made here for 21:20–24. On "Jerusalem" as metonymy for the Jewish nation, see Green, *Luke*, 738–39. On τῆς γῆς as the "the land [of Judah]" and not more generally "the earth," see John Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, Word Biblical Commentary, gen. eds. David Hubbard, John D. W. Watts, and Ralph P. Martin, Vol. 35c (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 1002; Plummer, *S. Luke*, 482; Fitzmyer, *Luke (X–XXIV)*, 1346; Marshall, *Luke*, 773. On "wrath to this people" as divine judgment, see Tannehill, *Luke*, 162.

<sup>41</sup>For this common view, see J. Bradley Chance, *Jerusalem, the Temple, and the New Age in Luke-Acts* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1988), 116, note 4; in addition, Plummer, *S. Luke*, 482; Green, *Luke*, 738. Goulder observed that the divine vengeance on Israel was based on Deut. 32:35 (*Luke*, 712). In fact, numerous Old Testament texts could be invoked.

<sup>42</sup>Similarly Michael Wolter, "Israel's Future and the Delay of the Parousia, according to Luke," in the series *Luke the Interpreter of Israel*, gen. eds. David P. Moessner and David L. Tiede, Vol. 1: *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel: Luke's Narrative Claim upon Israel's Legacy* (Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1999), 309.

<sup>43</sup>Whether Luke thought Jerusalem eventually would be restored in the eschatological scheme of things after the vague "times of the Gentiles" is unclear, but possible; so Chance, *Jerusalem, the Temple, and the New Age*, 138; Tannehill, *Luke*, 163; Nicholas H. Taylor, "Luke-Acts and the Temple" in *The Unity of Luke-Acts*, ed. Joseph Verheyden in series *Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologiarum Lovaniensium*, vol. CXLII (Leuven: University Press, 1999), 716; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke, Volume 2: 9:51–24:53* in *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 1682.

### Divine Wrath as Expiated

Luke intends to place Jesus' death into the context of cultic-military expiation in a fashion similar to the famous legend of the consul Decius. The linguistic evidence favorable to this interpretive background is that Luke is the only New Testament writer to describe the Gethsemane experience of Jesus as an ἀγών (22:44).<sup>44</sup> This term, of course, is the standard way for Romans to refer to the gladiator games. By using this term, Luke framed the events surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus to be understood by a Roman audience at least as a contest to the death. Similarly, Brown took note of the prominent athletic background for the term ἀγών and summarized the sense of the Lukan passage this way: "The Father cannot spare Jesus from drinking the cup, but the strengthening angel prepares Jesus so that he arises from prayer in tense readiness for the combat with the approaching power of darkness (Luke 22:53)."<sup>45</sup>

Luke's emphasis, however, was more along the lines of a cultic-military devotion to death rite of a Roman general on the field of battle than of athletic or gladiatorial contests, which were absent any religious expiatory associations. Thus, Luke presented the death of Jesus as cultic and expiatory on behalf of the nation. The destiny of Israel is wrapped up in the destiny of Jesus.<sup>46</sup> In the death and resurrection of Jesus, Israel simultaneously is both judged and redeemed. God's redemptive purpose for Israel in the Luke-Acts narrative Luke extends at least as far as Peter's sermon to the inhabitants of

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<sup>44</sup>This point actually does not depend on Lukan authorship of 22:43–44, though I would conclude the evidence, while finely balanced, favors authenticity. For a brief discussion of the question of the integrity of these verses, and the point made above about what the use of ἀγών reveals about the framing of the death of Jesus independently of the authorship of these verses, see Appendix 2.

<sup>45</sup>Raymond E. Brown, "The Lukan Authorship of Luke 22:43–44" in *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers*, no. 31 (1992), 163. This presentation later appeared with substantially the same content in *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave, A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels, Volume 1* in The Anchor Bible Reference Library, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 179–90.

<sup>46</sup>Although I am not arguing what N. T. Wright argues, my thesis on Luke's literary strategy with the theme of divine wrath resonates with how Wright theologically has configured the meaning of Jesus' resurrection: "Luke, knowing where his narrative will end, wants it to be seen that Jesus' death and resurrection will not occur as it were in a private capacity: his fate will determine that of Israel itself," N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* in Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 3 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 436. Notice carefully how the word "fate" enters into Wright's choice of wording; for me this wording is evocative of the use of *fatum* by Roman historians that I believe Luke echoes in composing his Gospel.

Jerusalem in Acts 3:14–21.<sup>47</sup> Moessner suggested Luke potentially could have conceived the fulfillment of the imminent Parousia in the events surrounding the extension of the Gospel into the account in Acts and the ministry of the Apostle Paul.<sup>48</sup> From a narrative point of view, this idea I find intriguing in light of Luke's literary strategy in using the motif of divine wrath.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the language of the wrath of God, although infrequent in Luke, has significant literary and theological value. The term ὀργή appears to have the form of a *terminus technicus* in Lukan eschatology that is based on Roman historiography. Once God's divinely commissioned messiah had been decisively rejected by Israel, her fate was sealed by the divine wrath. Yet, at the same time, Israel's very rejection of messiah, which eventuates in messiah's death, by God's design does not exhaust God's redemptive purposes for Israel. Jesus' death from a Roman historical point of view simultaneously was both a prodigy and an expiation. His death was a prodigy in that this event evoked the inevitable doom of the Judean state. His death was an expiation in that this event evoked a leader's devotion to death in the Roman cultic-military style that would expiate the divine wrath for those who chose to associate with him in this conflict.

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<sup>47</sup>This paper is not about the narrative in Acts, but we at least want to indicate a literary unity that binds together themes in the Gospel with the narrative development in Acts. The further question whether Luke intended to close the door on Israel by the end of Acts is a tangled argument tangential to the thesis developed within this paper.

<sup>48</sup>David P. Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet: The Literary and Theological Significance of the Lukan Travel Narrative*, Foreword by Richard B. Hayes (Harrisburg, Penn.: 1989), 312.

## APPENDIX 1

CONCORDANCE: ΟΡΓΗ AND ΘΥΜΟΣ IN THE NEW TESTAMENT<sup>49</sup>

## ὀργή wrath; anger (36)

<b>Matt. 3:7</b>	ὑπέδειξεν ὑμῖν φυγεῖν ἀπὸ τῆς μελλούσης ὀργῆς;
<b>Mark 3:5</b>	περιβλεψάμενος αὐτούς μετ' ὀργῆς, συλλυπούμενος ἐπὶ
<b>Luke 3:7</b>	ὑπέδειξεν ὑμῖν φυγεῖν ἀπὸ τῆς μελλούσης ὀργῆς;
<b>Luke 21:23</b>	τῆς γῆς καὶ ὀργῆ τῷ λαῷ τούτῳ
<b>John 3:36</b>	ζωὴν, ἀλλ' ἡ ὀργὴ τοῦ θεοῦ μένει
<b>Rom. 1:18</b>	Ἐποκαλύπτεται γὰρ ὀργὴ θεοῦ ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ ἐπὶ
<b>Rom. 2:5</b>	καρδίαν θησαυρίζεις σεαυτῷ ὀργὴν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὀργῆς ὀργὴν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὀργῆς καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως δικαιοκρισίας
<b>Rom. 2:8</b>	δὲ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ ὀργὴ καὶ θυμός.
<b>Rom. 3:5</b>	ὁ ἐπιφέρων τὴν ὀργὴν; κατὰ ἄνθρωπον
<b>Rom. 4:15</b>	ὁ γὰρ νόμος ὀργὴν κατεργάζεται· οὐ
<b>Rom. 5:9</b>	αὐτοῦ σωθησόμεθα δι' αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῆς ὀργῆς.
<b>Rom. 9:22</b>	θεὸς ἐνδείξασθαι τὴν ὀργὴν καὶ γνωρίσαι τὸ πολλῇ μακροθυμίᾳ σκευὴ ὀργῆς κατηρτισμένα εἰς ἀπώλειαν
<b>Rom. 12:19</b>	δότε τόπον τῇ ὀργῇ, γέγραπται γάρ
<b>Rom. 13:4</b>	ἐστὶν ἕκδικος εἰς ὀργὴν τῷ τὸ κακὸν
<b>Rom. 13:5</b>	μόνον διὰ τὴν ὀργὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ διὰ
<b>Eph. 2:3</b>	ἡμεθα τέκνα φύσει ὀργῆς ὡς καὶ οἱ
<b>Eph. 4:31</b>	καὶ θυμός καὶ ὀργὴ καὶ κραυγὴ καὶ
<b>Eph. 5:6</b>	γὰρ ἔρχεται ἡ ὀργὴ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπὶ
<b>Col. 3:6</b>	ἃ ἔρχεται ἡ ὀργὴ τοῦ θεοῦ
<b>Col. 3:8</b>	τὰ πάντα, ὀργὴν, θυμόν,
<b>1Th. 1:10</b>	ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ὀργῆς τῆς ἐρχομένης.
<b>1Th. 2:16</b>	ἐπ' αὐτούς ἡ ὀργὴ εἰς τέλος.
<b>1Th. 5:9</b>	ὁ θεὸς εἰς ὀργὴν ἀλλὰ εἰς περιποίησιν

<sup>49</sup>*The Greek New Testament*, 4<sup>th</sup> rev. ed., ed. Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger, in cooperation with the Institute for New Testament Textual Research, Münster/Westphalia (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993). Statistics generated by *Accordance*, Ver. 6.0, OakTree Software Specialists, Altamonte Springs, FL, 2004. Published in cooperation with the Gramcord Institute.

1Tim. 2:8	όσίους χει̐ρας χω̐ρις <b>όργης</b> καὶ διαλογισμοῦ.
Heb. 3:11	ώμοσα ἐν τῇ <b>όργῇ</b> μου· εἰ
Heb. 4:3	ώμοσα ἐν τῇ <b>όργῇ</b> μου· εἰ
James 1:19	βραδύς εἰς τὸ λαλήσαι, βραδύς εἰς <b>όργήν</b> ·
James 1:20	<b>όργῇ</b> γάρ ἀνδρὸς δικαιοσύνην θεοῦ οὐκ ἐργάζεται
Rev. 6:16	καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς <b>όργης</b> τοῦ ἀρνίου,
Rev. 6:17	ἡ μεγάλη τῆς <b>όργης</b> αὐτῶν, καὶ
Rev. 11:18	καὶ ἦλθεν ἡ <b>όργῇ</b> σου καὶ ὁ
Rev. 14:10	τῷ ποτηρίῳ τῆς <b>όργης</b> αὐτοῦ καὶ βασανισθήσεται
Rev. 16:19	τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς <b>όργης</b> αὐτοῦ.
Rev. 19:15	τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς <b>όργης</b> τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ

**θυμός** anger, soul, spirit, sorrow, mind (18)

Luke 4:28	καὶ ἐπλήσθησαν πάντες <b>θυμοῦ</b> ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ
Acts 19:28	καὶ γενόμενοι πλήρεις <b>θυμοῦ</b> ἔκραζον λέγοντες·
Rom. 2:8	πειθομένοις δὲ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ <b>όργῇ</b> καὶ <b>θυμός</b> .
2Cor. 12:20	ἔρις, ζῆλος, <b>θυμοί</b> , ἐριθείαι,
Gal. 5:20	ἔρις, ζῆλος, <b>θυμοί</b> , ἐριθείαι,
Eph. 4:31	πάσα πικρία καὶ <b>θυμός</b> καὶ <b>όργῇ</b> καὶ
Col. 3:8	πάντα, <b>όργήν</b> , <b>θυμόν</b> , κακίαν,
Heb. 11:27	μὴ φοβηθεῖς τὸν <b>θυμόν</b> τοῦ βασιλέως·
Rev. 12:12	πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἔχων <b>θυμόν</b> μέγαν, εἰδὼς
Rev. 14:8	τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ <b>θυμοῦ</b> τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς
Rev. 14:10	τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ <b>θυμοῦ</b> τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ
Rev. 14:19	τὴν ληνὸν τοῦ <b>θυμοῦ</b> τοῦ θεοῦ τὸν
Rev. 15:1	αὐταῖς ἐτελέσθη ὁ <b>θυμός</b> τοῦ θεοῦ.
Rev. 15:7	χρυσᾶς γεμούσας τοῦ <b>θυμοῦ</b> τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ
Rev. 16:1	ἑπτὰ φιάλας τοῦ <b>θυμοῦ</b> τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς
Rev. 16:19	τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ <b>θυμοῦ</b> τῆς <b>όργης</b> αὐτοῦ
Rev. 18:3	τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ <b>θυμοῦ</b> τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς
Rev. 19:15	τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ <b>θυμοῦ</b> τῆς <b>όργης</b> τοῦ

APPENDIX 2

THE INTEGRITY OF LUKE 22:43–44<sup>50</sup>

The integrity of verses 43–44 in this chapter is suspect. Here is the rundown:

**Omission of verses 43–44:**

ⲡ<sup>69vid</sup> ⲡ<sup>75</sup> Ⲡ<sup>1</sup> A B N T W 579 1071\* *Lect*<sup>1/2</sup> it<sup>f</sup> syr\* cop<sup>sa, boPt</sup> arm geo some  
Greek mss<sup>acc. to Anastasius-Sinaita.</sup>; Greek and Latin mss<sup>acc. to Hilary</sup> Ambrose Jerome

**Inclusion of verses 43–44 (with minor variations):** 43 ὄφθη δὲ αὐτῷ ἄγγελος ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ ἐνισχύων αὐτόν. 44 καὶ γενόμενος ἐν ἀγωνίᾳ ἐκτενέστερον προσήχετο· καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἰδρὼς αὐτοῦ ὡσεὶ θρόμβοι αἵματος καταβαίνοντες ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν.

Ⲡ<sup>\*, 2</sup> D L Δ\* Θ Ψ 0233 *f*<sup>1</sup> 13<sup>c</sup> 157 180 205 565 597 700 828<sup>1/2</sup> 892\* 1006  
1010 1071<sup>c</sup> 1241 1243 1292 1342 1424 1505 *Byz* [E F G H Q] *l* 184<sup>1/2</sup> it<sup>a, aur,</sup>  
b, c, d, e, ff<sup>2</sup>, i, l, q, r<sup>1</sup> vg syr<sup>c, p, h, pal</sup> cop<sup>boPt</sup> eth slav Diatessaron<sup>arm</sup> Justin Irenaeus<sup>gr</sup>  
Hippolytus<sup>acc. to Theodoret</sup> Origen<sup>dub</sup> Ps-Dionysius Arius<sup>acc. to Epiphanius</sup> Eusebian Canons  
Didymus<sup>dub</sup> Epiphanius Chrysostom Theodore Nestorius Theodoret all versions  
and most Greek mss<sup>acc. to Anastasius-Sinaita.</sup> John-Damascus; Hilary Greek and Latin  
mss<sup>acc. to Jerome</sup> Augustine Quodvultdeus

**Inclusion of verses 43–44 with notation (asterisks, obeli):**

Δ<sup>c</sup> 0171<sup>vid</sup> 892<sup>c</sup>

**Transposition of verses 43–44:**

After Matt. 26:39: *f*<sup>13</sup> [13\* 828<sup>1/2</sup>]

**Transposition of verses 43–44 and add καὶ ἀναστάς ἀπὸ τῆς προσευχῆς (Luke 22:45a):**

After Matt. 26:39: *Lect*<sup>1/2</sup> [*l* 184<sup>1/2</sup>]

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<sup>50</sup>*The Greek New Testament*, 4<sup>th</sup> rev. ed., ed. Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger, in cooperation with the Institute for New Testament Textual Research, Münster/Westphalia (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993).



In his textual commentary, Metzger indicated that verses 43–44 were considered on the whole by the committee an addition to the original text, even though an ancient one. Many ancient and diverse authorities support the omission, and the passage is not stable in its placement, being found occasionally after Matt. 26:39.<sup>51</sup> The verses had been omitted from the UBS edited Greek text in the second edition, but included within double brackets in the third and fourth editions.

Noland observed how the arguments for and against the inclusion are "finely balanced."<sup>52</sup> He also noted how scholarly opinion has vacillated between accepting and rejecting the verses, but the current trend is to question their integrity.<sup>53</sup> Noland himself rejected the verses on the basis of what he saw as the chapter's broken chiasmic structure, but "primarily on the basis of the emotional tone of the verses."<sup>54</sup> That primary argument, however, is strictly subjective and not persuasive. Brown presented a reasoned defense of Lukan authorship, covering textual and stylistic evidence, structure and thought pattern, hypotheses about scribal logic, and the problem of bloody sweat. His conclusion was, "While clearly the evidence available does not settle the issue of whether Luke wrote 22:43–44, in my judgment the overall import of the five types of evidence or reasoning discussed above favors Lukan authorship."<sup>55</sup>

The history of the Western text of Acts probably comes into play in the manuscript development of the Gospel. One can note that the inclusion of Luke 22:43–44 is varied, but predominantly Western. That the Western text of Acts could be Lukan in origin is not far-fetched.<sup>56</sup> With the history of the Acts text in mind, my thought would be that Luke

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<sup>51</sup>Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), 177.

<sup>52</sup> Noland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 1080, n. "d."

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 1081, n. "d."

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Brown, "The Lukan Authorship of Luke 22:43–44," 159.

<sup>56</sup> W. A. Strange, *The Problem of the Text of Acts* in Society for New Testament Studies: Monograph Series, gen. ed. G. N. Stanton, vol. 71 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Strange was severely critiqued by Peter M. Head, "Acts and the Problem of Its Texts," *The Book of Acts in its Ancient Literary Setting*, ed. B. W. Winter and A. D. Clarke in *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting*, vol 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and Carlisle: Paternoster, 1993), 415–444. Head's critique of Strange has telling points, but he certainly misrepresented Strange's argument, as if Strange conjured two separate published editions of Acts. (Strange is clear that he is speaking of only *one vorlage*, itself an unfinished draft that included the author's own annotations, *Origin*, 187). Head argued for the traditional view of the priority of the Alexandrian text, with the Western text as simply later scribal activity. Under the present status of the evidentiary

22:43–44 also is Lukan in origin, and, like most of the Western text of Acts, is a surviving authorial annotation maintained in a few manuscripts in the textual history of the Gospel—a Western backflow current in the history of the Gospel especially stimulated by the publication of the text(s) of Acts, which began circulating widely in the middle to late second century.

Even if Luke 22:43–44 is not original to the Gospel, the passage is an early and ancient interpretation. The direction of that interpretation still makes the same background point made in the paper: the use of a term ἀγωνία, given its rarity in the New Testament in general, is more at home in the Greco-Roman world of athletes, stadiums, gladiators, and amphitheaters than in the typical language of the New Testament, and the term is illustrative of a more Roman way to frame the death of Jesus in a world totally dominated by Roman power and politics.

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material, the question of the integrity of Luke 22:43–44 remains debated, and scholars will continue to vacillate over its inclusion.