

Introduction

RECENT SCHOLARSHIP HAS DRAWN particular attention to several issues relating to politics, imperial cults, and imperial propaganda in New Testament studies. For instance, Pauline scholarship, acknowledging the importance of the imperial background, has suggested that the ideology of the imperial cult influenced, at least, to some extent Paul's writings.¹ This intriguing phenomenon is also evident in Lukan scholarship, attempting to depict Luke's attitude towards the Jewish and the Roman authorities.² In this respect, Lukan scholars, stressing the political aspects in Luke–Acts, have dealt with the imperial context more seriously in relation to Luke's appreciation of the imperial cults or the imperial propaganda. Regardless of the position one takes about Luke's depiction of the Roman Empire, it is very unlikely that Luke is not interested in politics. It is almost impossible to comprehend Luke's writing in isolation from its historical setting, the empire.³

One of the main reasons for modern scholars' greater attention to Luke's Gospel in connection with the imperial background than to other Synoptic Gospels is that there is a significant difference between them. While Matthew and Mark pay little attention to secular history, Luke

1. E.g., Jewett, *Romans*, 48; also see White, *Apostle of God*, esp. 124–29, who links the Roman background to Paul's images of Christ's lordship and his family metaphor; Horsley's three edited books, *Paul and Empire*, where various scholars maintain that the Roman Empire was an important background for Christianity; *Paul and Politics*, and *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*; Blumenfeld, *Political Paul*, who defines Paul as a political thinker; Wright, "Paul and Caesar," 173–93; Harrison, "Paul and Imperial Gospel," 71–96; Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*.

2. For the bibliography, see the discussion below. With respect to the Gospel of Matthew, see Carter, *Matthew and Empire*; Riches and Sim, eds., *Matthew*; in particular, Oakes, "A State of Tension," 75–90, where he summarizes the relationship between Rome and NT writers.

3. Even the literary critics are well aware that the text is not isolated from the reality. E.g., Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?*, 97; for the focus on the historical environment in Luke–Acts, see Darr, *Herod the Fox*, 62, who defines it as "extra-text"; more recently, Yamazaki-Ransom, *Roman Empire*, 6.

does not distance himself from the reality of the Roman Empire. In this respect, it can be said that Luke is more concerned with political figures and situations than Matthew and Mark are. For example, by setting his narrative within imperial history (Luke 2:1–2; 3:1; Acts 11:28; 18:2), Luke emphasizes the importance of the Roman context. What is more, he is the only Gospel writer who refers to the emperor, sometimes, by name.⁴ As Yamazaki-Ransom rightly states, “it cannot be said that Luke was viewing the empire as merely a stage for the early Christian drama.”⁵ It is therefore essential to consider Luke’s political background, the Roman Empire, in order to draw a clear picture of his writings. As will be discussed, the question as to why Luke is deeply interested in the religio-political situation of the empire will provide us with a valuable clue to the issue of his concept of Jesus’ authority in comparison with the emperor’s authority.

Although many scholars are interested in the imperial background, it is wrong to assume that there is a scholarly consensus on Luke’s attitude towards the Roman Empire or on his understanding of the Roman political authorities. I shall briefly outline major scholarly views on the relations between Luke–Acts and the Roman Empire. A good example would be an apologetic reading which has made a significant contribution to a scholarly interest in the political aspect of Luke–Acts. It is worth looking into the apologetic positions. In general, they can be divided into two different positions, an apologia *pro ecclesia* and an apologia *pro imperio*.

Let us start by taking a quick look at the political apologetic position. Those who take that position tend to underline that one of the Lukan purposes in his two volumes is to defend or justify Christianity before the Roman political authorities. Among them, Cadbury argues that Luke composed his two-volume work as an apology for Christianity addressed to a Roman magistrate, Theophilus.⁶ According to him, the purpose of Luke–Acts is to argue that Christianity was a genuine branch of Judaism, which enjoyed a status of *religio licita*.⁷ Cadbury, acknowledging the

4. See Luke 2:1 (Augustus: according to Yamazaki-Ransom, *Roman Empire*, 70, n.1, it is possible that Αὐγοῦστος is “a title rather than a proper name”), 3:1 (Tiberius), and Acts 11:28; 18:2 (Claudius). Also, Nero, although Luke does not refer to him by name, appears in Acts 25:8, 10–12, 21, 25; 26:32; 27:24; 28:19.

5. Yamazaki-Ransom, *Roman Empire*, 3 and 70–79.

6. Cadbury, *Making*, 5–7; this view is still supported by several scholars: for example, Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:10 and Evans, *Luke*, 108–11; for a history of research into Luke’s political apologetic position, see Walaskay, “*And so We Came*,” 1–14.

7. Cadbury, *Making*, esp. 299–316; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:10; also see Haenchen, *Acts*, 102, 630–31, 691–64. But the main difference between Cadbury and Haenchen is that,

political aspects of Luke's writing, has made an important contribution to the continuity between Judaism and Christianity. However, his use of the category *religio licita* is problematic. According to many interpreters, it is very doubtful that such *religio licita* even existed at the time of Luke's writing.⁸ If we date Luke's work after the Jewish revolt of AD 66–73, it is hard to claim that Luke attempted to obtain a legal license from Rome by linking it directly to Judaism.⁹

Another influential proponent of the political *apologia pro ecclesia* position, Conzelmann, asserts that Luke depicts Jesus and his followers as accommodating to the empire, which was in turn favorable to the church on the assumption that his theology was developed as a response to "the situation in which the church finds herself by the delay of the *parousia* and her existence in secular history."¹⁰ For him, Luke attempts to minimize the political elements in Christianity in order to show that Christianity is politically harmless.¹¹ In other words, for him Luke does not react against the Roman Empire. Rather, Luke strives to eliminate the possible conflict

while the former uses the term *religio licita*, the latter uses a more general form of tolerance, *religio quasi licita* (Acts, 630–31); for more reading lists of that position, see Neagoe, *Trial of the Gospel*, 9 n28.

8. See, for example, Maddox, *Purpose of Luke–Acts*, 91–93; Neagoe, *Trial of the Gospel*, 10; Walton, "State They Were In," 30.

9. Although it is uncertain, several scholars suggest that Luke–Acts is dated to the early 60s because Luke does not know the result of Paul's trial in Rome: e.g., Hemer, *Acts*, esp. 365–410; see 367–70 for a list of scholars and their suggested dates from AD 57 to 135; Robinson, *Re-dating the New Testament*; Morris, *Luke*, 26. But it is hard to accept that Luke–Acts was composed under the reign of Nero, first, because it was probably very dangerous for Luke to write openly against the emperor, and second, because Luke presupposed the fall of Jerusalem in Luke 21:20–24. Thus, a late date of composition is more plausible. In spite of some differences, the usual scholarly consensus on a post-70 and post Markan date is more conceivable. Both Marshall, *Luke*, 35, and Ellis, *Luke*, suggest not long after AD 70; Hays, *Luke's Wealth Ethics*, 77, dates Luke's writing to AD 70–90; Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, 227, dates it around the same period of the 80s; for the dating after Nero, but before Domitian, of about AD 85, see Brent, *Imperial Cult*, 73 and Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 27–30; Rowe, "Luke–Acts," 294, and Bond, *Pontius Pilate*, 139, date it most likely to Domitian; Fitzmyer (*Luke*, 1:53–7) puts it slightly later at 80–85. Therefore, the most that can be said with certainty is that Luke wrote his two books for both Jews and a majority of Gentiles who were living in the Roman Empire and were familiar with the imperial cults in the second half of the first century (after 70s).

10. Conzelmann, *Theology*, 14.

11. *Ibid.*, 139; he further argues that "to confess oneself to be a Christian implies no crime against Roman law," 140. Even though Conzelmann argues that Christianity is politically harmless, his claim still includes the political aspect of Christianity.

between Christianity and Rome with the modification of the “original eschatological perspective” in two ways, in time and in space.¹²

Differently, P. W. Walaskay, an advocate of an apologia *pro imperio*, maintains that Luke–Acts is not an apology for the church but an apology for Rome directed at Luke’s own community, stating:

Far from supporting the view that Luke was defending the church to a Roman magistrate, the evidence points us in the other direction. Throughout his writings Luke has carefully, consistently, and consciously presented an *apologia pro imperio* to his church.¹³

According to Walaskay, Luke aims to persuade his readers that “the institutions of the church and empire are coeval and complementary” and that “the Christian church and the Roman Empire need not fear nor suspect each other, for God stands behind both institutions giving to each the power and the authority to carry out his will.”¹⁴ On the basis of Luke’s account of the trials of Jesus and Paul, in particular, Walaskay argues that the Roman system and the Roman representatives were viewed as uniformly favorable. For example, he suggests that Luke highlights Pilate’s fair trial with the focus on his three-fold declaration of Jesus’ innocence, while emphasizing Jewish leaders’ responsibility for injustice.¹⁵

What is interesting is that, according to Conzelmann’s and Walaskay’s views (both apologetic positions), Luke’s work has been considered pro-Roman. Let us briefly critique such a pro-Roman position. It is quite doubtful that Luke portrays Jesus and his followers as law-abiding or politically harmless, or that he describes Rome favorably. Walaskay’s claim that Luke appears to be in favor of a degree of openness towards Rome is erroneous. As will be seen in the subsequent chapters (Jesus’ trial and Luke’s use of the emperor’s existing titles), it is very unlikely that Luke is

12. Ibid., 138; for a detailed criticism of Conzelmann’s view, see Cassidy, *Society and Politics*, 148–55, and his *Jesus, Politics, and Society*, 7–9 and 128–30; Maddox, *Purpose*, 96–97; Walaskay, “*And so We Came*,” 15–22; Barrett, *Luke the Historian*, 63; Ahn, *Reign of God*, 52; Green, *Luke*, 798.

13. Walaskay, “*And so We Came*,” 64; also see Maddox, *Purpose of Luke–Acts*, 96–97; Robbins, “*Luke–Acts*,” 201–21, stressing a symbiotic relationship between the empire and Christianity.

14. Walaskay, “*And so We Came*,” IX–X.

15. Ibid., 39–63; for a detailed criticism of Walaskay, see the following chapters; also see Bond, *Pontius Pilate*, 161; see Weatherly, *Jewish Responsibility*, 92–97; Neagoe, *Trial*, 12; Walton, “*State*,” 29–30.

favorable toward Rome. For example, Walaskay's view that Luke shows Pilate's gentleness and justice in Jesus' trial¹⁶ cannot be accepted. In contrast to his view, the trial scene functions as heightening not only Jewish leaders' responsibility for injustice but also Pilate's injustice.¹⁷ Moreover, when Luke compares Jesus as victor/peace-bringer/savior with the emperor, the emperor's claim to such titles is questioned in Luke's writings.¹⁸ Put briefly, Luke's description of peace is quite different from that of *Pax Romana*. In this respect, it is likely that peace and order established by Luke's Jesus were "critical to the continuance of Roman rule."¹⁹ As Gilbert rightly suggests, Luke–Acts "generates a vigorous critique of Rome and its claims to universal authority and dominion" by using terms or images often associated with Roman power.²⁰ Luke neither depicts Christianity as politically harmless nor as pro-Roman.

Furthermore, although Conzelmann recognizes that Luke takes into account the situation of Christianity within the context of the Roman Empire, his misconception of a binary division between religion and politics is flawed. As a result, he fails to draw a vivid picture of the characterization of the ancient religion. In order to fully scrutinize the relations between Luke's Gospel and the Roman emperor, we need first to answer several questions: Was there any sharp distinction between religion and politics in the first-century world? What were the characteristics of ancient religion, in particular, the imperial cults? Or, if politics was associated closely with religion, how far did this relationship influence Luke's writing? These questions will aid us to answer the issue as to how Luke portrays Jewish leaders, Roman authorities, and finally the emperor in his writings. Again, we should not downplay the fact that Luke's writings were written in the context of the Roman Empire. With the help of a general picture of first-century religion, we can analyze how Luke uses the imperial images to his own advantage.

It has been questioned whether religion was separated from politics in the Roman Empire. Some would claim that the demarcation between religion and politics had been found in the ancient world. Prior to the discussion of the relationship between them in the Roman Empire,

16. Walaskay, "And so We Came," 48–49.

17. See Ch. 2.

18. See Ch. 4.

19. Cassidy, *Society and Politics*, 148–49.

20. Gilbert, "Roman Propaganda," 242.

it is necessary to consider that in Republican Rome in general. Given the assumption that concepts of divine beings in the empire were not completely new or different from that of the Republic, an understanding of the relationship between religion and politics during that period may help us describe the characteristics of the imperial cults. J. A. North holds that the close association of religion and politics was already found in the Republic.²¹ He further states: "It would not be an exaggeration to say that the competition between the political leaders of the late Republic was fought out to a significant extent in the language of religion."²² If his argument is right, this evidences that the political leaders of the Republic were associated considerably with religions or religious activities. That is, the political leaders in that period attempted to connect their power or authority with divine beings in order to ensure success or to strengthen their power. As North observes, ancient materials illustrate that "politically active Romans of this period (late Republic) had to reckon with religion and the gods as important factors in determining events and in expressing their claims to authority and command."²³ Thus, it is almost impossible to separate religion from politics. This kind of phenomenon did also happen in the Roman Empire.

In many cases, the holders of the political power were identified with the holders of the religious influence in the empire. Most scholars agree that religion and politics were frequently interconnected and overlapped in the time of the Roman Empire.²⁴ In order to detail the relationship between religion and politics in the empire, let us look at the imperial cult in terms of its religiosity.²⁵ This might be very helpful in challenging two views, first, that religion was separated from politics, and, second, that the imperial cult was purely political, lacking any genuineness of religion or the importance of the religious life among the populace. These two views are intertwined and interconnected. All too often, when some scholars, stressing the sharp demarcation between them, explore

21. North, *Roman Religion*, 22; also his Table 1 at 23–24.

22. *Ibid.*, 32.

23. *Ibid.*, 33; e.g., see Cicero, *On the Command of Pompey*, 47.

24. Harland, *Associations*, 120; Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 5–12; Wright, "God and Caesar," 157; Ahn, *Reign of God*; Yamazaki-Ransom, *Roman Empire*.

25. The apologetic positions, although acknowledging both historical and political backgrounds, do not draw attention to the importance of the imperial cults. That is why they tend to ignore the close relationship between politics and religion of the empire.

the relationship between religion and politics in the Roman Empire, they tend to define the imperial cult as solely a political phenomenon.²⁶ Among them, Kurt Latte, when discussing the concepts of the imperial cult, stresses that emperor worship played a minor role and was not really a religious phenomenon at all.²⁷

In a quite similar vein, other scholars, namely, Arthur D. Nock, Martin P. Nilsson, and Nicholas Fisher, strongly assert that imperial cults were mainly political, and insufficiently religious.²⁸ For instance, Nilsson, highlighting the imperial cult's lack of "all genuine religious content,"²⁹ argues that "[the cult's] meaning lay far more in state and social realms, where it served both to express loyalty to the rule of Roma and the emperor and to satisfy the ambition of the leading families."³⁰ His view focuses only on the aspect of the political role of the imperial cult. Likewise, Fisher asserts: "although the *collegia* had religious functions, they were above all concerned with status, solidarity, sociability, and aspects of social security."³¹

Fisher is correct in arguing that the *collegia* and the imperial cult were related to the socio-political realms. However, he fails to recognize the relationship between religion and society in antiquity, for his term "social" leads to a serious problem.³² According to his argument, religious functions connected with social concerns are not sufficiently religious, since they are devoid of feelings or personal experience. It is wrong,

26. E.g., see Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte*; Nilsson, *History*, 384–94; and Bowersock, *Augustus and the Greek World*, 112–21. Along with their characterization of religion as solely political, their argument is based upon two other misconceptions: first, they tend to understand religion (the imperial cult) primarily as public, neglecting any significance of private activities; and, second, they neglect or, at least, downplay the role of rituals in the religious activities of first-century people.

27. Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte*, 326, asserts: "Der Kaiserkult blieb . . . die Anerkennung des römischen Weltreichs, in seiner gegenwärtigen Form, eine konventionelle Geiste." He also emphasizes the increasing centrality of the imperial cult to Roman religion, particularly through its ability to synthesize itself with traditional pagan cults in various subtle ways. The imperial cult was "une invention des pères de l'Eglise," quoted in Alföldy, "Subject and Ruler," 254.

28. Nock, *Essays on Religion*; Nilsson, *Greek Piety*; and Fisher, "Roman Associations."

29. Nilsson, *Greek Piety*, 178.

30. Nilsson, *History*, 385; cf. de Ste. Croix, *Class Struggle*, 394–95.

31. Fisher, "Roman Associations," 1222–23; also see MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*.

32. See Harland, *Associations*, 60; Brent, *Imperial Cult*.

however, to claim that only individual feelings can define a religion in the ancient world. Other aspects should be taken into account to avoid anachronistic analysis of ancient religion. That is, first-century people's personality should be carefully considered. In the Roman Empire, group identity was viewed as more important than individual identity. According to cultural anthropologists, such as Bruce Malina and Jerome Neyrey, first-century people "did not comprehend the idea of an individual person in his or her uniqueness."³³ By the application of their notion to the imperial cult, it is "important *not* to consider them as individualistic"; that is, their "dyadic" or group-oriented personality should be emphasized.³⁴ All too often, their identity was determined by the group which they belonged to.

The way of thinking themselves in antiquity is very different from that of thinking ourselves in modern times. As Gerd Theissen strongly maintains, the separation between religion and politics "manifested itself only in modern times" and that "in antiquity, nobody could imagine politics without religion, and neither did Israelite or early Jesus groups."³⁵ To put it differently, the imposition of modern notions and assumptions has caused a distinct separation between religion and politics in the Roman Empire.³⁶ The modern distinction between them fails to draw a clear picture of the characteristics of religion, associated with various activities, such as political, social, and economic activities. Given that the group-oriented personality was stressed in the first century world in contrast to today's individualistic personality, Fisher's argument is flawed. He does not consider how religious activities were interconnected deeply with the social life of the populace through various religious activities. The social concerns were not separable from their religio-political life.

33. Malina and Neyrey, "First-Century Personality," 72.

34. *Ibid.*; italics original.

35. Theissen, "Political Dimension," 226. However, the fact that politics was not separated from religion does not necessarily mean that politics and religion were regarded as one realm. It seems to me that their boundaries were not as clear as the distinction between religion and politics in modern times. In fact, at times they overlapped. Even though Theissen's argument is not completely wrong, it is dangerous to claim that religion and politics were regarded as one sphere. Rather, I wish to emphasize the strong cohesion between two realms. Based upon such a strong relationship, we can analyze the concepts or characteristics of ancient politics and religion.

36. Wright, "God and Caesar," 157 and 161, argues that the modern notion of the separation between religion and politics, between church and state, is a product of the Enlightenment, and cannot be found in Judaism or early Christianity.

In this regard, it is wrong to claim that the social realm is equated purely with the political realm. That is, by relating religious functions to social activities, first-century people's worldview or their way of religious life was expressed and enhanced by means of group-oriented personality based upon social concerns. It is also expressed through various forms of group rituals in ways that ensured the safety and the identity of the members.³⁷ That is why first century people's piety and honor towards their gods and goddesses as well as the emperors were expressed within group settings rather than within personal settings. As Harland rightly asserts, "the forms that such cultic honors (or 'worship' to use a more modern term) could take do not necessarily coincide with modern or Western preconceptions of what being religious should mean."³⁸

Many scholars have emphasized the importance of the integration of imperial cults within civic life in Asia Minor, along with political, social, and religious significance for various social strata of the population.³⁹ They strongly argue that, in contrast to the traditional view, a variety of evidence of imperial rituals within civic life indicates the genuine significance of the imperial gods within religious life at the local level. In this regard, Harland states:

Far from being solely political with no religious significance for the populace, imperial cults and the gods they honored were thoroughly integrated at various levels within society.⁴⁰

Therefore, the imperial cults should be understood as both a political and religious phenomenon.

Let us look into the Augustan cult, in particular. In the beginning of the empire, the Augustan revolution was as much religious as it was political. Brent asserts:

Divination and the rites of the augur were constitutional as well as religious necessities in a society in which both religion and politics were intertwined. The [Augustan] imperial cult

37. On the discussions of the significance of rituals, see Bourque, "Anthropologist's View of Ritual," 19–33; Kertzer, *Rituals, Politics and Power*, 8, who describes ritual as "action wrapped in a web of symbolism"; Bell, *Ritual*.

38. Harland, *Associations*, 61.

39. E.g., Price, *Rituals and Power*; Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*; Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 1:100–17; Harland, *Associations*; Gradel, *Emperor Worship*.

40. Harland, *Associations*, 266–67.

represents therefore both a constitutional revolution and a religious reformation.⁴¹

There are many examples which signify a strong link between religion and politics in the Augustan cult. At times, the performance of Augustus' religious role was used for highlighting the association between religion and politics in the Roman Empire. For example, in *Res Gestae*, it is reported:

The altar of peace of Augustus the Senate, in thanks for my return ordered to be consecrated in the Campus Martius, in which it ordered that magistrates and priests (*magistratus et sacerdotes*) and Vestal Virgins should make an annual sacrifice . . . The temple of Janus on the Quirinal, which our ancestors wished to remain shut, when peace had been secured by victories throughout the whole Roman Empire, by land and by sea . . .⁴²

Two things are important here. First, the cult sites were not simply added to temples of the local pantheon but were located at the centers of the new Augustan cities.⁴³ In doing so, Augustus, not only as a political leader but also as a divine-being, attempted to enhance his power and authority. Mitchell states:

This was one reason why the cult became central in the minds of its citizens. Emperor worship was not a political subterfuge, designed to elicit the loyalty of un-tutored provincials, but was one of the ways in which Romans themselves and provincials alongside them defined their own relationship with a new political phenomenon, an emperor whose powers and charisma were so transcendent that he appeared to them as both man and god.⁴⁴

As Mitchell stresses, it is evident that the Augustan cult had a religious significance.

Second, it is said that both magistrates and priests, political and religious leaders, played an active role in making an annual sacrifice. Their cooperation hints at crossovers between religion and politics. The fact that sacrifice, one of the most important religious activities, was

41. Brent, *Imperial Cult*, 17.

42. RG 12–13; for Brent, *Imperial Cult*, 35, this passage clearly “connects the annual sacrifices at the Ara Pacis with augury and *pax deorum* and also with the Temple of Janus.”

43. Winter, “Acts and Roman Religion,” 96; also see Fishwick, *Imperial Cult*.

44. Mitchell, *Anatolia I*, 103.

performed by both implies that the boundaries between the two were not very clear.⁴⁵

A weak distinction between religion and politics is also found in the emperor's title. Augustus himself became a member of all the colleges of priests; he also assumed the high priestly office of *pontifex maximus* in 12 BC, which signified "divine hero, with honorific symbols and piety," although he delayed for reasons of propriety.⁴⁶ In temples and house shrines, the genius of Augustus wears the veil as a symbol of traditional Roman *pietas*. Also, when religious laws were to be decided, it was the emperor himself, as a *pontifex maximus*, who was very influential over the senate.⁴⁷ Augustus, a political ruler, was frequently viewed as a divine being or, at least, as the most important priest having the high priestly office of *pontifex maximus* and conducting *lustrum* during census.⁴⁸

What is more, when the provincial council decreed a competition in order to honor Augustus around 9 B.C, the winning proposal was suggested by the proconsul of the province, Paullus Fabius Maximus. His edict of Asia Minor, heightening Augustus' religious role, shows how it established a new calendar year beginning on Augustus' birthday, 23 September and how Augustus' birthday was celebrated as the beginning of the Golden Age.⁴⁹

[It is difficult to know whether?] the birthday of the most divine Caesar is a matter of greater pleasure or greater benefit. We could justly consider that day to be equal to the beginning of all things. He restored the form of all things to usefulness, if not to

45. Brent, *Imperial Cult*, 76, holds that in the Roman Empire magistrates often held cultic priesthoods.

46. Jewett, *Romans*, 48; also see North, *Roman Religion*, 33.

47. North, *Roman Religion*, 34, here North describes this phenomenon as "the new house of the emperor-priest"; see also Tacitus, *Ann.* 3.58–59, 71.

48. On the discussion of relations between *lustrum* and religious significance, see Brent, *Imperial Cult*, 84, where he claims that the *lustrum* had "a religious dimension in acts of census on the basis of Livy's work's account of Servius," one of the legendary founders of the Roman constitution (534 BC). He further claims that "the *lustrum* here refers to the 'purification' of the citizen body after its members had been determined (*censu perfecto*), and the capacity of each person in the rank now allotted them to contribute to the cost of the war against the Vei. The ceremony (*suovetaurilia*) was performed in the Campus Martius where a pig, sheep, and bull were sacrificed (Livy 1.44.2)." Brent, *Imperial Cult*, 84; also see Plate 6; Livy 39.22.4–5; 42.20; *Julius Obsequ.* 13, 44, 46, 49, 52, 63.

49. The beginning of the proconsul's edict had been lost. See Price's book, *Rituals and Power*.

their natural state, since it had deteriorated and suffered misfortune. He gave a new appearance to the whole world, which would gladly have accepted its own destruction had Caesar not been born for the common good fortune of all. Thus a person could justly consider this to be the beginning of life and of existence, and the end of regrets about having been born. Since on no (other) day could each one receive a starting point more beneficial for corporate and personal improvement than the day that has been beneficial to all; And since it happens that all the cities of Asia have the same date for entrance into local office, which is an arrangement that has clearly been formed according to some divine counsel in order that it might be the starting point of honors to Augustus; And since it is difficult to give thanks equal to such benefactions as his unless we devise some new manner of reciprocation for each of them; And since people could celebrate more gladly the birthday common to all because some personal pleasure had been brought to them through (his) rule; Therefore, it seems proper to me that the birthday of the most divine Caesar be the one, uniform New Year's day for all the polities. On that day all will take up their local offices, that is, on the ninth day before the Kalends of October, in order that he might be honored far beyond any ceremonies performed for him and that he might rather be distinguished by all, which I consider to be the greatest service rendered by the province. A decree of the koinon of Asia should be written encompassing all his virtues, so that the action devised by us for the honor of Augustus should endure forever. I will command that the decree, engraved on a stele, be set up in the temple, having arranged for the edict to be written in both languages.⁵⁰

Also, let us take a look at the decree of the provincial council which explains the reasons to honor Augustus. It was inscribed along with Fabius' decree.

A decision of the Hellenes in Asia; proposed by the high priest Apollonios son of Menophilos of Aizanoi. Whereas the providence that ordains our whole life has established with zeal and distinction that which is most perfect in our life by bringing

50. OGIS 458.1.3–30 = *IPriene* 105; Friesen's translation, *Imperial Cults*, 33. Also see Price's translation, *Rituals and Power*, 55. The Greek text is cited from Ehrenberg and Jones (EJ), *Documents*, no. 98, lines 32–41 (p. 82); also see, Klauck, *Religious Context*, 297–98. This is an important text which will be used as evidence signifying Augustus' authority (or his superiority) and his benefaction in Ch.3 and in the victor/peace-bringer/savior chapter in comparison with Jesus' authority.

Augustus, whom she filled with virtue as a benefaction to all humanity; sending to us and to those after us a savior who put an end to war and brought order to all things; and Caesar, when he appeared, the hopes of those who preceded [. . .] placed, not only surpassing those benefactors who had come before but also leaving to those who shall come no hope of surpassing (him); and the birth of the god was the beginning of good tidings to the world through him . . .⁵¹

Both Fabius' decree and the decree of the provincial council are good examples of the religiosity of the early imperial/Augustan cult, fuelled by relief at the end of the civil wars. From Fabius' decree, it is shown that Augustus' birthday, stressing the good news and his salvific and beneficial activity, is considered as the beginning of everything, since it was the end of an individual's regret that he had been born.⁵² Augustus is depicted as "one of the divinities by which the people took the oath"⁵³ by heightening his religious aspects in connection with his political power. In other words, the characterization of the Augustan cult is explicitly expressed in the decree, showing that his political status is not isolated from his religious significance. It is almost impossible to separate religion from politics, and, finally, to 'depoliticize' Jesus or Christianity.⁵⁴ Therefore, in order to understand early Christianity, it is crucial to consider its political environment, the Roman Empire, and the emperor.⁵⁵ Apologetic studies, based upon a simple demarcation between the Romans and the Jews or between the political and the religious, ignore characteristics of first-century religion.⁵⁶

Let us briefly see a more recent study on Luke and the empire. S. Kim's book, *Christ and Caesar*, provides an analysis and assessment of the relationship between Jesus and the emperor in the writings of Luke and Paul. His book is divided into two parts: one for Paul and another for Luke. Kim argues that both Luke's and Paul's writings are not in opposition to

51. OGIS 458.1.30–71; Friesen's translation, *Imperial Cults*, 34.

52. See Lintott, *Imperium Romanum*, 182–83; Price, *Rituals and Power*, 54–5; EJ, 98.

53. Lintott, *Imperium Romanum*, 183.

54. See Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 5–12.

55. See Yamazaki-Ransom, *Roman Empire*, 2.

56. See Horsley, *Paul and Roman Imperial Order*, 5. As Bryan, *Render to Caesar*, 6, rightly stresses, we have to attempt to move beyond the simple dichotomy of good and evil.

Caesar. Rejecting both Richard Horsley's and N. T. Wright's views that Jesus is proclaiming a political kingdom as opposition to the Roman Empire, Kim argues that both Luke and Paul seem favorable towards the Roman empire, and that the church in both writings is aided by Roman power in the spread of the gospel.⁵⁷ He further asserts that, for Luke, the redemption Jesus brought has nothing to do with the overthrowing of the Roman Empire or replacing it with a politically independent government.⁵⁸ For him, redemption or salvation in Luke is a deliverance from the kingdom of Satan, not from the kingdom of the emperor. Thus, he strongly argues that Jesus' redemptive work in Luke has nothing to do with altering the political, economic, and social structures to bring Israel political freedom and social justice.⁵⁹ Thus, he claims that Luke's purpose in writing is to show the gospel as not threatening to the Roman Empire. In this regard, he seems to stress that we must see Luke's writings as religious rather than political, for he continuously maintain that neither Jesus nor Christianity were against the imperial Roman order, but rather sin, death, Satan, and other spiritual evils.

There is, however, a serious problem with Kim's argument. Like the apologetic positions, Kim's view that Luke (or Paul) focuses mainly on spiritual, not on socio-political realities, is inconceivable. Neglecting that the socio-political aspects influenced Luke's writings, Kim consistently denies other aspects, such as politics and socio-economic structures. As noted above, religion and politics appear to be closer related in Luke than Kim asserts. As a result, his assertion does not deal with an important question as to whether Luke wrote his book in conscious reaction to the imperial cult and ideology of Rome. As seen in Fabius' imperial decree, the contents of religion and politics, at times, overlapped each other in the empire.

Along with Kim's book, C. Kavin Rowe's monograph, *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Graeco-Roman Age*, has made another helpful contribution to Lukan scholarship although it deals mainly with Acts.⁶⁰ Rowe focuses on the relations between Luke and the Roman Empire by providing historical background and insight into Greco-Roman culture. He directly challenges an apologetic reading, and notes: Luke

57. Kim, *Christ and Caesar*, 189. He further argues that Paul and Luke had a "dialectical attitude" towards the Roman imperial order (190).

58. *Ibid.*, 95.

59. *Ibid.*, 147.

60. Rowe, *World Upside Down*; see also his article "Luke-Acts," 279–300, and his book *Early Narrative*.

“aims at nothing less than the construction of an alternative total way of life - a comprehensive pattern of being - one that runs counter to the life-patterns of the Graeco-Roman world.”⁶¹ In this regard, he discusses how Acts introduces a new culture of Christianity, asserting that “New culture, yes—coup, no. The tension is thus set.”⁶² Rowe claims that Luke’s message seriously challenges the dominant culture. For him, this means that Christians do not wish to replace the emperor with Jesus, but they wish to alter the culture. In doing so, he further argues that Luke’s gospel is not anti-Rome because Luke is not calling for the violent overthrow of the government.

Despite his historical and cultural context in Acts, there are several problems with Rowe’s argument. First, Rowe seems to argue that Luke’s depiction of Gentile culture is portrayed in a negative way, maintaining that Luke attempts to overturn Gentile culture. However, it is not just Gentile culture which rejects the gospel. As some Gentiles reject Jesus’ teaching, some of the Jews in Acts do not welcome Jesus’ message. Acts shows that part of Israel does not recognize Jesus as the fulfillment of God’s promise.

Second, Rowe’s argument is not good enough to explicate *how* Jesus is viewed as the true Lord, while it is good enough to explain *why*. That is, Rowe does not connect the title *κύριος* directly with Jesus’ authority in comparison with that of the emperor, although he is successful in stressing Jesus’ identity by using the title. In this respect, he pays little attention to the one particular issue that could move the discussion forward, namely, the closeness between Luke’s stance toward the empire and his evaluation of Jesus’ authority in comparison with the emperor.

More importantly, although they are right in asserting that Luke’s literary agenda is not linked to an overthrowing of the Roman Empire, both Kim and Rowe seem to contradict themselves at times. Kim argues, “Luke deliberately contrasts Jesus the Messianic king/lord to Caesar Augustus, and claims that Jesus is the true *kyrios* and *soter*, the true bearer of the kingship of God and that he will bring the true *pax* on earth, replacing the false *pax* brought about by the military conquest of Caesar, a false *kyrios* and *soter*.”⁶³ In a similar manner, Rowe maintains that Luke

61. Rowe, *World Upside Down*, 4 and 17.

62. Ibid., 91.

63. Kim, *Christ and Caesar*, 80–81.

stresses “the universal Lordship of God in Jesus.”⁶⁴ But both refrain from calling this anti-imperial stance. Their view that Luke’s gospel, because he is not calling for the violent overthrow of the empire, is not anti-Rome is wrong. In other words, a writer’s anti-Roman stance is one thing, but his or her overthrowing of the Roman state is another. The two things should be dealt with separately.⁶⁵

Both Kim and Rowe do not consider whether certain imperial titles (savior, lord, benefactor, etc) would be seen as exclusive to the emperor in certain contexts.⁶⁶ In this regard, their assertion that Luke does not aim intentionally to show competition between Jesus and Caesar⁶⁷ should be re-considered. Nor do they discuss how first-century audiences who would be familiar with these titles for Caesar would be able to detach themselves from their culture so easily. How would first-century people interpret Luke’s use of the title *κύριος*, which was widely used for the emperor? What if they understood it as a direct/indirect competition between Jesus and Caesar? Given the importance of the emperor in the Roman world and the pervasiveness of imperial ideology throughout the empire, it is not unreasonable that Luke’s use of the titles would be related implicitly to his anti-imperial messages, which encouraged his readers to be devoted to Jesus, not to the emperor.

I do agree that Jesus in Luke is not calling for the overthrow of the empire. However, it seems to me that Kim’s and Rowe’s view of resistance is somewhat narrow, as they do not acknowledge passive forms of resistance. Several anti-imperial aspects of Luke’s message do not require that he sought the overthrow of the empire. A more rounded explanation of the socio-economic-political message of Jesus in Luke would emphasize Jesus’ implicit (or, sometimes, coded) challenge to religious authority, economic exploitation, and the emperor’s authority.

It is true that Luke does not highlight such a direct competition as in Revelation. But, at least, in Luke’s writings there is a clue to an indirect competition between them. When Luke’s narrative rejects pagan reverence/worship, Luke does not intend to remove the key function of the honor system. As the title *κύριος* bears its honor/authority, Luke implicitly depicts Jesus as a true *κύριος* in competition with the emperor.

64. Rowe, *World Upside Down*, 136.

65. See also Ch.3, “Benefactor: Who is Greater?”

66. See the chapters on Benefactor and Savior.

67. Rowe, *World Upside Down*, 5 and 91.

He does so by attempting to highlight Jesus' true lordship in comparison with other gods or emperors in Luke–Acts.⁶⁸

Then, in what ways does Luke attempt implicitly to critique the Roman Empire? Many scholars have attempted to analyze several issues relating to tax collectors. They have been interested in the relationship between Jesus and the tax collectors,⁶⁹ Jesus' table fellowship with them,⁷⁰ Zacchaeus' conversion,⁷¹ the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector,⁷² and the characterization of the tax collectors among first-century Jews.⁷³ Despite the scholarly interest in the tax collectors, one important aspect of the narratives has been almost entirely overlooked; that is, relations between them and the Roman power. In this study, I will argue that the tax collectors were employees of Roman power. Many scholars draw little attention to the relationship the power of the emperor and the exploitation of tax collectors, although admitting that they oppressed others. Moreover, they fail to see the implicit links between Jesus' authority and the emperor's authority through the stories about the tax collectors. For me, they seem to ignore who is ultimately responsible for their defrauding people. For example, Harrison acknowledges that repentance is one of the most important themes in tax collectors and Pharisees.⁷⁴ But he tends to neglect that repentance for Luke is something more significant than Harrison supposes. For Luke, repentance is an implicit presentation of his critique against the emperor's authority. Or, some interpreters neglect how important Lukan themes, such as repentance and Jesus' mission of seeking and saving the lost, in the story of Zacchaeus⁷⁵ are implicitly related to Luke's critique of the emperor's authority. With careful historical consideration of the characters and setting of the scene, it

68. In this respect, Luke strives to keep the meaningfulness of honor language of the ancient world. He does not aim to change all the things in the empire, but rather seems to question whether the emperor should be considered as the most honorable figure at that time.

69. Walker, "Jesus and Tax Collectors," 221–38.

70. Kilgallen, "Was Jesus Right?" 590–600.

71. Corbin-Reuschling, "Zacchaeus's Conversion," 67–88; Tannehill, "Story of Zacchaeus," 201–21.

72. Harrison, "Case of Pharisee and the Tax Collector," 99–111; Friedrichsen, "Temple, a Pharisee, a Tax Collector," 89–119; Doran, "Pharisee and Tax Collector," 259–70.

73. Okorie, "Characterization of Tax Collectors," 27–32.

74. Harrison, "Case of Pharisee and Tax Collector," 105.

75. Tannehill, "Story of Zacchaeus," 210.

will be explored how Luke contrast Jesus and the emperor. For me, Luke's focus on Jesus' authority through the tax-related accounts is stated in a minimal and implicit way but deepens in significance. That is, I argue that the common understanding of tax collectors among scholars can be reframed and broadened by stressing the importance of tax-related issues in Roman society and imperial ideology. Readers of Luke have long noted several issues, and those will not be rejected here. But how would a listener more attuned to imperial ideology/cult than other issues have understood the tax-related accounts? What connections and conclusions might that listener have made concerning the identity of Jesus? Reading several tax-related accounts in Luke through the lens of Roman culture and imperial ideology enables us to see Jesus' interaction with tax collectors as Luke's implicit critique of the emperor's authority on the basis of the assumption that Luke strategically characterizes Jesus in comparison with the Roman emperor, the most powerful man-god in the universe, in order to elevate Jesus' authority.

Acknowledgment that the boundary between religion and politics was very unclear in the ancient world plays a vital role in examining how political Luke was in his Gospel in response to the Jewish leaders and the emperor. Given that the emperor, as a political leader, was worshipped in various forms of imperial cult, it is very likely that Luke, as a religious writer, was involved in political activities because of the nature of ancient religion. To put it another way, as the emperor's religious role is highlighted, Luke's religious writing conveys a significant political implication. With the focus on the historical and political background of his Gospel, the goal of this study is to analyze Luke's description of Jesus' authority on the basis of his attitude towards the Roman Empire. Luke's portrayal of the empire will provide us with his basic concept of the emperor, because the emperor himself represents the empire. In achieving the goal, this study will compare Jesus' authority with the emperor's authority; that is, it will analyze in what ways Luke attempts to stress Jesus' superiority over the emperor even though their relationship is not stated directly in his writings.

Although some scholars have been aware of Luke's critique of the emperor and the Roman officials, few have attempted to examine to what degree Luke is not in favor of the emperor's power/authority in detail. Unlike previous scholarship, I will divide the emperor's power/authority into two realms, his *auctoritas* and his *imperium*, in order to analyze Luke's evaluation of the emperor's authority and his emphasis on Jesus' authority. In this respect, several questions will be answered. How does

Luke relate Jesus' authority to the emperor's authority? What is the role of tax-related issues in his writing in connection with the emperor's moral *auctoritas*? What significance does the tax collectors' immorality bear? Why are those questions so important for understanding Jesus' authority in comparison with the emperor's power? In what ways is Jesus as savior different from the emperor as savior? How does Luke interpret the emperor's *imperium* in the discussion of the title 'savior'?

Given that Luke actively engages the social, cultural, and political values of the empire, certain patterns evident in the depictions of the emperor's authority will be identified by using heuristic models for the relationship between Jesus and the emperor. Luke is not only deliberate in his development of Jesus' authority and his introduction of Roman power, but also he hints at the theme of Jesus' authority through the narrative in such a way that the uses of his different narratives are meaningfully related to each other. The intentionality with which Luke develops the significance of Jesus' authority should be emphasized. Thus, Luke's particular interest in politics (e.g. Roman power) should not be ignored in the discussion of his depiction of the emperor's authority in comparison with Jesus' authority. This study focuses on Luke's attitude toward the empire and his definition of Jesus' authority by re-defining the emperor's authority.

Outline of the Study⁷⁶

Chapter 1, as a whole, falls into two sub-chapters: Luke's emphasis on Jesus' authority in comparison with John the Baptist at the beginning

76. In terms of the methodology of my study, I use various methods, rather than using a single method, in order to achieve my goal. They include literary, redactional, socio-historical, rhetorical criticism and the like. These methods will be used as complementary tools for a fuller comprehension of Luke's writing. When it comes to the descriptions of the reality of the empire, I will apply archaeology and iconography because they are very useful in describing various imperial themes and historical background. When discussing the social and cultural values of first-century people, the social-scientific method will be used since their behavior or their thoughts are not the same as ours. When necessary, several social theories will also be applied to make my argument more convincing. Moreover, I will use intertextuality when comparing one with another. In this respect, I do not limit my argument to similarities between Luke's Gospel and precursor sources; rather, I stress differences between the two. Thus, I focus on how Luke has shaped and molded the narrative to express his theological goals.

of his writing, and his blame of Jewish leaders, Herod, and the Roman governor in the account of Jesus' trial.

Chapter 2 will centre on Luke's purpose in the census and tax-related narratives. It analyses the main issue concerning taxes expressed in Luke's Gospel with the focus on the context of the Roman taxation system, because only Luke, unlike the other evangelists, associates Jesus' birth and death with tax-related issues. Also, I will answer the question as to how Luke understands Augustus' authority in terms of tax collectors.

Chapter 3 will deal with the title 'benefactor' expressed in Luke 22:24–27. It focuses on the question as to whether the grouping of 'the kings of the Gentiles' includes the Roman emperor. Also, it will argue from what perspective Luke describes such rulers in order to explore the criteria for true benefactors.

Finally, in Chapter 4, I will argue that the title, savior, cannot be explained without considering other significant titles of the emperor, mainly, victor and peace-bringer. These titles can also be applied to Jesus' identity when discussing him as savior. The similarities between Jesus and the emperor will be explained by assimilation theory; and the differences by contra-culture theory. After discussing how Augustus (or his successors) achieved peace in the Roman Empire, I also intend to relate Jesus' interaction with tax collectors to Jesus' salvation activity in Luke's Gospel. On the basis of this, I will explore the meaningfulness of Jesus' salvation which comes after his victory over tax-collectors' wrongdoings. That is, I will show in what ways Luke attempts to regard Augustus as a pseudo-savior in contrast to his description of Jesus as a true savior through the stories of tax collectors. Moreover, Zechariah's praise (Luke 1:68–79) will be analyzed in the light of the analysis of 'victor/peace-bringer/savior'.