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### **The Socio-Rhetorical Role of Old Testament Scripture in Luke 4–19**

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It is a special pleasure to write an essay in honor of Professor Doctor Zdenek Sazava. We first met in 1986, when he came to the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas meetings at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. He stayed in our home after the meetings, and my wife Deanna and I remember fondly his visit with us. We have seen each other at yearly meetings since then, and on one occasion Prof. Sazava was a gracious host to my wife and me in Prague. Prof. Sazava has shown great interest in my work, and he has reviewed some of my books for journals in the Czech Republic. One of his special interests is the Gospel of Luke, and I will focus on this Gospel in Prof. Sazava’s honor.

It is widely known that Isaiah 61:1-2 plays a programmatic role in the Gospel of Luke as a result of Jesus’ public reading of it at the beginning of his adult ministry in his home synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:18-19).<sup>1</sup> It is also widely recognized that the author of Luke and Acts exhibits extensive knowledge of the Septuagint Greek Old Testament (LXX).<sup>2</sup> Few interpreters, however, have a clear view of the manner in which significant portions of the OT function as socio-rhetorical resources for the configuration of major scenes and major shifts in emphasis as the Lukan story unfolds.

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<sup>1</sup> L. C. Crockett, “The Old Testament in the Gospel of Luke: With Emphasis on the Interpretation of Isaiah 61.1-2” (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 1966).

<sup>2</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX)* (AB 28; Garden City: Doubleday, 1981) 114-16; cf. Vernon K. Robbins, “The Social Location of the Implied Author of Luke and Acts,” in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (ed. Jerome H. Neyrey; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991) 323-26.

This essay investigates the intertextural relation of the Lukan story to portions of the Old Testament with guidelines set forth in *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse* and *Exploring the Texture of Texts*,<sup>3</sup> as well as a series of essays the author has published alongside these two books.<sup>4</sup> The essay focuses only on Luke 4:1–19:27, the section of the story from the beginning of Jesus’ adult ministry to the point where he goes into Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, Jesus’ death provides a means for the renewal of the story of God’s people through the coming of the spirit into a multitude gathered together from wide regions of the Mediterranean world after Jesus’ ascension into heaven (Acts 2).

The thesis of the essay is that Luke 4:1-13 introduces major topics from Deuteronomy 6 and 8, which concern possessions and devotion to God. Then Luke 4:14-30 reconfigures those topics through recitation or reference to passages from Isaiah and 1–2 Kings.<sup>5</sup> After Luke 7:11-35 summarizes the results of the attempts of John the Baptist and Jesus to bring the renewal program of Deuteronomy, 1–2 Kings, and Isaiah to the people of Israel, Jesus is a dinner guest in the home of prominent Pharisees on three occasions

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<sup>3</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996) 96-115, 121-24, 129-43; idem, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1996) 40-62. See the online *Dictionary of Socio-Rhetorical Terms*:

<http://www.emory.edu/COLLEGE/RELIGION/faculty/robbins/SRI/defns/>.

<sup>4</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, “From Enthymeme to Theology in Luke 11:1-13,” in *Literary Studies in Luke-Acts: A Collection of Essays in Honor of Joseph B. Tyson* (ed. R. P. Thompson and T. E. Phillips; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998) 191-214. Online:

<http://www.emory.edu/COLLEGE/RELIGION/faculty/robbins/Theology/theology191.html>; idem, “Socio-Rhetorical Hermeneutics and Commentary,” in *EPI TO AYTO. Essays in honour of Petr Pokorny* (ed. J. Mrazek, R. Dvorakova, and S. Brodsky; Praha-Trebenice, Czech Republic: Mlyn, 1998) 284-97. Online: <http://www.emory.edu/COLLEGE/RELIGION/faculty/robbins/commentary/commentary284.html>; idem,

“The Present and Future of Rhetorical Analysis,” in *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture: Essays from the 1995 London Conference* (ed. S. E. Porter and T. H. Olbricht; Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 146; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) 24-52.

<http://www.emory.edu/COLLEGE/RELIGION/faculty/robbins/future/future24.html>; cf. David B. Gowler, “The Development of Socio-Rhetorical Criticism,” in Vernon K. Robbins, *New Boundaries in Old Territory: Form and Social Rhetoric in Mark* (ed. D. B. Gowler; Emory Studies in Early Christianity 3; New York: Peter Lang, 1994) 1-36. Online:

<http://userwww.service.emory.edu/~dgowler/chapter.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> For recitation, reference, and reconfiguration, see Robbins, *Tapestry*, 96-115, 120-24; idem, *Exploring*, 40-50.

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(7:36-50; 11:36-54; 14:1-24). These dinners provide a beginning, middle, and end to Luke 7:36–14:35, and at these dinners major *topoi*<sup>6</sup> from Deuteronomy, 1—2 Kings, and Isaiah are contextualized in households owned by wealthy people.<sup>7</sup> Jesus' interaction with Pharisees at these dinner parties establish as the dynamics for a major shift in the story at Luke 15 to the *topos* of "seeking and saving the lost." This *topos* exhibits a reconfiguration of Ezekiel 34 by the author of Luke for the purpose of moving the renewal program to the specific issue of gathering God's faithful people in a context where early Christians are gathering in households around the Mediterranean world during the decades after the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple by the Roman army in 66-70 CE.

In contrast to some essays that simply refer to OT passages, this essay will recite the verses that are important for understanding the broader context in the OT. The purpose is to argue that the Gospel of Luke, like many other books in the NT, exhibits knowledge by the author of major *topoi* in the context of many OT texts and uses these *topoi* as resources to configure scenes and introduce argumentation into them.

### **1. Luke 4:1-13: The Testing of Jesus**

In the Lukan version of the Testing of Jesus in the Wilderness, Jesus responds to the Devil with recitations of Deut 8:3; 6:13; and 6:16. The Matthean and Lukan versions both present the first temptation as a setting where the Devil tells Jesus to turn bread to stone (Matt 4:3; Luke 4:3). In Luke 4:4, Jesus responds with, "One does not live by bread alone," while Matt 4:4 includes an additional clause of the verse, "but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." While the Lukan Jesus does not recite the clause about living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, it becomes obvious that Jesus is enacting this principle with his speech and action.<sup>8</sup> People who hold verses in memory regularly will recite only the first part, the last part, or a favorite clause

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<sup>6</sup> For the meaning of *topos* and its plural *topoi* as used in this paper, see Wilhelm H. Wuellner, "Toposforschung und Torahinterpretation bei Paulus und Jesus," *NTS* 24 (1978) 463-83. A *topos* is a "social, cultural, or ideological location of thought" that has a twofold function: an argumentative-enthymematic and an amplificatory-descriptive function (p. 467).

<sup>7</sup> For opening-middle-closing texture, see Robbins, *Tapestry*, 50-53, 70-72; idem, *Exploring*, 19-21.

<sup>8</sup> Actually, his unwillingness to act in the way the Devil wants him to.

in the middle of a verse as the key to the entire verse. Because of its context in Luke 4:1-4, all of Deut 8:2-3 is important:

2: And you shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments, or not. 3: And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know; that he might make you know that one does not live by bread alone, but that one lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.

The Lukan story of the testing of Jesus reconfigures the *topos* of forty years of being tested in the wilderness (Deut 8:2) into forty days in which “he ate nothing” (Luke 4:2).<sup>9</sup>

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The specific reference to “testing” in Luke 4:2 exhibits the recontextualization<sup>10</sup> of an Israelite cultural *topos* of “God’s testing of Israel” in Deut 6—8.<sup>11</sup> In addition, the *topos* of “knowing in one’s heart, remembering, and keeping” in Deut 6—8<sup>12</sup> sets the stage for Jesus’ “knowing by heart” the verses from Deut 6 and 8 so that he can recite them to the Devil and enact them (by resisting the Devil’s challenges)<sup>13</sup> when he is tested. The Lukan story reconfigures the “let you hunger” in Deut 8:3 into “And he ate nothing in those days; and when they were ended, he was hungry” (Luke 4:2).<sup>14</sup> In addition, it is noticeable that “knowing” is part of the repetitive texture<sup>15</sup> of Deut 8:2-3 in the context of “remembering”:

- (1) you shall remember;
- (2) testing you to know;

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Moses in Exod 34:28; Deut 9:9, 18; Elijah in 1 Kgs 19:8.

<sup>10</sup> For recontextualization, see Robbins, *Tapestry*, 107; idem, *Exploring*, 48-50.

<sup>11</sup> Deut 6:16; 8:2, 16.

<sup>12</sup> Deut 6:1-3, 6, 17, 24-25; 7:9, 11-12; 8:1-2, 6, 11, 18.

<sup>13</sup> To understand the dynamic of these tests as challenges and *ripostes*, see Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (rev. ed.; Atlanta: John Knox, 1993) 42-45; Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 307-8; Robbins, *Exploring*, 80-2.

<sup>14</sup> Matt 4:2 changes it into: He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished.

<sup>15</sup> For repetitive texture, see Robbins, *Tapestry*, 46-50, 66-69; idem, *Exploring*, 8-9.

(3) which you did not know, nor did your fathers know;

(4) that he might make you know.

In the Lukan story, Jesus enacts the attributes of knowing by heart, remembering, and keeping the commands God gave to Israel in the context of their testing in the wilderness.

There are other *topoi* in Deut 6—8 that also are important for the Lukan story. Deut 8:5 presents the analogy that as a father disciplines his son, so “the Lord your God disciplines you.” The devil refers to Jesus as “the Son of God” in this first test and also the last test (Luke 4:3, 9), evoking the concept of God the Father disciplining his Son. Deut 8:11-14 emphasizes the problem that “forgetting” rather than “remembering” causes a person’s heart to be “exalted” rather than “humbled” (8:14). Later in the Lukan story, while Jesus is dining in the house of a ruling Pharisee, he discusses the importance of humbling oneself rather than exalting oneself (Luke 14:7-11). On a later occasion, this time as a direct challenge to Pharisees, Jesus says: “You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of others; but God knows your hearts; for what is exalted by human beings is an abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15). On a still later occasion, Jesus tells a parable about a Pharisee and a tax collector to people “who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt” (18:9-14). The parable ends with the premise that all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted” (18:14). In the Lukan understanding, when the hearts of Pharisees, the elect leaders of Israel, are “exalted,” they have “forgotten” the commandments of the Lord (Deut 8:2-3, 6). Deut 8:17-18 refers specifically to the problem that when the people of Israel become rich, they may forget that God gave them the power to get their wealth, rather than that they got their wealth through their own power and the power of their hand. When this happens, according to Luke, it is necessary for God to “exalt the humble” (1:52).

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In the second and third tests, Jesus responds from the chapter in Deuteronomy that features the famous Jewish Shema: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD; and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (Deut 6:4-5). The Lukan order of the second and third tests follows

the order of the elaboration of the Shema in Deut 6. In response to the Devil's challenge that if Jesus will worship him, he will give him all the kingdoms of the world (Luke 4:6-7), Jesus recites a portion of a verse (Deut 6:13) that elaborates the second *topos*<sup>16</sup> in the Shema, "The LORD our God is one LORD" (6:4). In response to the Devil's challenge that he should throw himself down from the Temple, Jesus recites a portion of the verse (6:16) that begins the elaboration of "You shall love LORD your God with all your heart, soul, and might" (6:5).<sup>17</sup> This verse reformulates "loving God" in terms of "not putting the LORD your God to the test." This means that the final two tests of Jesus represent a reconfigured framework of testing into which Jesus introduces *topoi* conventionally associated in the biblical story with interpretation of the Shema.

Immediately after the Shema, Deut 6:6 elaborates the meaning of the first *topos*, "Hear," with: "Keep these words I am commanding you today in your heart ..." In the account of the tests by the Devil, Jesus exhibits that he has these commands in his heart, and thus he can quote them from memory. Luke 10:27 features the Shema in the response of the lawyer to Jesus before Jesus tells the Parable of the Good Samaritan (10:30-37). At the end of his recitation of the Shema, the lawyer adds Lev 19:18: "and [you shall love] your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27). This means that the lawyer not only knows the Shema "by heart," but he also "knows" the meaning of the Shema in the broader context of the Torah as a result of knowing other places in which the *topos* "love" occurs in it. Knowing the meaning of the Shema in the broader context of the Torah enables the lawyer to answer correctly to Jesus that "the one who showed mercy" (10:37) is the neighbor. Jesus then enjoins the lawyer to enact what he has been able to recite and understand (10:37). Here Jesus recontextualizes what it means in Deut 6:3 to "observe the commands diligently" (Deut 6:1, 3). Indeed, they are not to "put the LORD your God to the test" (Deut 6:16), but they are to "diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and his decrees, and his statutes that he has commanded you" (Deut 6:17).

The story of the Devil's testing of Jesus, therefore, begins with a response by Jesus that evokes the necessity not to exalt oneself but to humble oneself before God who

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<sup>16</sup> The first *topos* is "Hear," which the discourse elaborates in Deut 6:6-9.

gives food, progeny, and wealth to God's people. As the middle and ending of the story unfold, Jesus' responses evoke a new context for the challenge of the Shema. Since Jesus "loves the LORD his God with all his heart, soul, and mind," he refuses to bow down and

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worship the Devil, and he refuses to test God by throwing himself off of the Temple. The Lukan story, then, reconfigures the story of Israel into the story of Jesus, and this story becomes an environment for recontextualization of the Shema within the story of the beginnings of Christianity.

## **2: Luke 4:14—7:35: The Poor, the Blind, the Leprous, the Dead, and the Deaf**

When Jesus comes to his home synagogue in Nazareth, his recitation of Old Testament scripture shifts the *topoi* from remembering God's commandments in a context where one has become rich (Deut 6—8) to confronting God's people with special responsibilities for the poor, the captive, the blind, and the oppressed (Isa 61:1-2; 58:6). This is a shift from special *topoi* in the Deuteronomic history to special *topoi* in the prophets. By the end of Jesus' challenges to the people of Nazareth, he recites an abbreviated account of Elijah's beneficial visit to the widow of Zarephath in Sidon (Luke 4:25-26; cf. 1 Kgs 17:1-16) and Elisha's cleansing of the leprosy of Naaman the Syrian (Luke 4:27; cf. 2 Kgs 5:1-14).

The Lukan story amplifies some, but not all, of the *topoi* in 4:16-30 either in Luke or Acts. The Sermon on the Plain begins with a contrast between the blessed poor and the unfortunate rich (6:20-25) that sets the stage for special teaching about lending without expecting anything in return (6:34-35) and about giving that brings abundance (6:38). Later, Jesus presents highly developed argumentation about wealth, possessions, and unfailing treasure in heaven (12:13-34).<sup>18</sup> Still later, Jesus tells a parable and presents an argument about managing wealth (16:1-13), followed by a statement about the Pharisees' love of money (16:14) and a parable about a rich man who refuses to respond to the hunger and misery of a poor man covered with sores (16:19-31). After the

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<sup>17</sup> Matt 4:5-8 has the last two tests in reverse order, with the result that Jesus recites the final verse of the paragraph before the first verse.

parable of the rich ruler who comes to Jesus (18:18-25), Jesus discusses possessions and “following” with his disciples (18:26-30). This *topos* is developed further in the story of Zaccheus (19:1-10), the parable of the ten pounds (19:11-27), a discussion of taxes (20:20-26), and the widow’s offering (21:1-4). Thus, as is widely known, the Gospel of Luke develops the *topos* of poverty and wealth both with narrative description and with argumentative discourse.

The Greek Septuagint adds “regaining of sight to the blind” to the Hebrew of Isa 61:1, and Luke 4:18 and 7:22 include this *topos*.<sup>19</sup> The narrator gives a summary that includes Jesus’ giving of sight to the blind in 7:21, a blind person receives his sight in a narrative account in 18:35-41, and there is an emphasis on Paul’s being healed of blindness in Acts 9:17-18; 22:11-13. Thus, among the *topoi* in Luke 4:18-19, only “bringing good news to

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the poor” is full developed both in narrative and in argumentation, with some development of the giving of sight to blind people, which is present in the Greek Septuagint of Isa 61:1, as well as in Isa 35:5.

It is not clear who all the “oppressed” may be who are “set free” (Luke 4:18) in the Lukan story. Surprisingly, the Gospel of Luke shows no development of the *topos* of release of captives, except Barabbas who is released rather than Jesus (22:18-25). However in Acts, the second volume of the Lukan account, release from prison becomes a prominent feature in the narrative (Acts 12:6-10, 17, 16:23-27).

Jesus’ reference to Elijah in Luke 4:25-26 implicitly evokes Elijah’s bringing of unlimited food to the widow’s household, and this *topos* may be enacted in Jesus’ feeding of 5,000 in 9:10-17.<sup>20</sup> Elijah’s raising of the son of the widow from death to life in 1 Kgs 17:17-24 is not only enacted in the narrative of the raising of a twelve year old girl (8:40-42, 49-56),<sup>21</sup> but more explicitly in the raising of the son of the widow of Nain earlier in

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<sup>18</sup> Abraham J. Malherbe, “The Christianization of a *Topos* (Luke 12:13-34),” *NovT* 38 (1996) 123-35.

<sup>19</sup> Both the Hebrew and the Greek Septuagint of Isa 35:5 refer to “the eyes of the blind” being opened in a context of healing the deaf, lame and dumb.

<sup>20</sup> Notice Jesus’ healing of people also in the context (Luke 9:11), similar to the range of benefits Elijah brought to the widow.

<sup>21</sup> Present also in Mark 5:21-24, 35-43//Matt 9:18-19, 23-26.

the story (7:11-16). Jesus' reference to Elisha's cleansing of a leper in Luke 4:27 is embellished in Luke not only with the cleansing of the leper in 5:12-14, but also with the cleansing of ten lepers, one of whom is a Samaritan, in 17:11-19.

In Luke 7:22, Jesus restates the program of activity that Luke 4:16-30 introduced to the story. Jesus' restatement places the receiving of sight by the blind in a place of emphasis at the beginning and the poor having the good news preached to them at a place of emphasis at the end of the list.<sup>22</sup> In between, the Lukan Jesus lists: (a) the lame walk; (b) the lepers are cleansed; (c) the deaf hear; and (d) the dead are raised (7:22). Throughout both Luke and Acts there is no narrative of a deaf person receiving hearing. In turn, there is no story in Luke about a lame man being healed so he can walk, but Acts contains two such stories (3:1-10; 14:8-10) and a summary referring to many lame who were cured (8:7).

It is clear, then, that the Lukan story develops many of the *topoi* of Luke 4:16-30 both in narrative enactment and in argumentative discourse. Preaching good news to the poor, giving sight to the blind, healing lepers, and raising the dead become a programmatic part of Jesus' activity as the story unfolds. Release from prison and healing the lame are developed in Acts rather than the Gospel of Luke. Healing the deaf so they may hear is not enacted explicitly in a story or in an argument in Luke or Acts. Rather, at the end of Acts Paul asserts that "this people" "will never understand", because "their ears are hard of hearing" (Acts 28:27).

### **3. Luke 7:36—14:24: Eating with Pharisees**

After Jesus' restatement of his activity in Luke 7:22, he dines three times in a house of a

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Pharisee (7:36-50; 11:35-54; 14:1-24). At these dinners, Jesus introduces *topoi* either from Deuteronomy or from Isaiah in a manner that transforms traditional "religious" issues into issues that concern social responsibility. Jesus' activity in these settings reconfigure emphases at the beginning of the prophetic book of Isaiah. In Isa 1:16-17,

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<sup>22</sup> Regularly, the emphatic positions are at the beginning and the end.

the prophet summarizes what the LORD says to the people with an emphasis on social responsibility:

1:16 Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean, 17 learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.

Especially at the three dinners in a house of a Pharisee in Luke 7:36—14:35, Jesus confronts people in a manner similar to Isaiah's confrontation of the people of Israel. In each instance, Jesus criticizes a focus on traditional "religious" issues that bypasses "social responsibilities." In the house of Simon the Pharisee, Simon raises a traditional religious issue concerning the association of a holy prophet with a sinner. In 7:41-43, Jesus transforms the "religious" issue into an issue of "forgiving a financial debt" (7:41). Forgiveness, then, concerns wealth, which is an issue that goes back to Deut 6, which Jesus recited to the Devil in response to two of the tests (Luke 4:5-12). When Jesus asks Simon which debtor loves the creditor more (Luke 7:42), he has evoked the *topos* of "love" that is central to Deut 6—7. The *topos* of love is not only present in Deut 6:5 (the Shema) but continues into Deut 7, where the assertion is made that the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, "because the Lord loved you" (7:8) and the Lord is "the faithful God who maintains covenant loyalty with those who love him" (7:9). In Deut 7:13, the assertion is made that if you heed the Lord's ordinances, "he will love you, bless you, and multiply you." He will bless the fruit of your womb, ground, grain, wine, oil, cattle, and flock. Indeed, "you shall be the most blessed of people" (7:14), including the removal of illness and disease (7:15). When Jesus responds to Simon, he is developing a *topos* that the testing of Jesus by the Devil implicitly introduced into Lukan discourse. When Jesus' response to Simon turns Simon's concerns about "sinfulness" into the topic of "love," which concerns God's giving of abundant wealth, the woman's willingness to anoint Jesus' feet with expensive ointment (Luke 7:37-38, 46) emerges as a paradigmatic instance of "love" (7:47). The woman, Jesus asserts, knows how to enact love by multiple acts of generosity with oil, an item which is actually mentioned as one of God's "blessings" in abundance to Israel in Deut 7:13. Forgiveness of debts and generosity with one's possessions must have priority as one begins to discuss sinfulness and forgiveness.

At the second dinner, where the Pharisee is concerned that Jesus did not wash his hands before he ate (another “traditional religious issue”), Jesus addresses the following topics:

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- (1) give for alms those things which are within (11:41);
- (2) do not neglect justice and the love of God (11:42);
- (3) do not load people with burdens hard to bear (11:46);
- (4) do not kill and build tombs for prophets [who hold the people of Israel responsible for social and economic expressions of love] (11:47-48);
- (5) do not take away the key of knowledge (11:52).

This list embellishes the central *topos* of “love of God” in Deut 6:5 with the *topos* of “justice” from Isa 1:17. In the final assertion by Jesus about “the key of knowledge,” we recognize the *topos* of “knowing, remembering, and doing” that lies in Deut 8:2-5. Jesus’ list, then, builds upon and expands *topoi* central to Deut 6—8 and Isaiah.

At Jesus’ last dinner in the house of a ruling Pharisee, his actions begin with healing (14:2-4) in a manner that reconfigures Deut 7:15: The LORD will turn away from you every illness. In Luke 14, the illness of dropsy is a symbol of greed, which is based on the insatiable thirst and hunger of a man with this disease.<sup>23</sup> When Jesus heals the dropsy, he is symbolically healing the illness of greed in the presence of people of wealth. As Jesus interprets the significance of what he has done, he addresses the *topos* of “honor,” which is a widespread Mediterranean value, with the argumentative *topos*: “All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted” (Luke 14:11). As we recall, the *topos* of humbling oneself and being exalted is central to Deut 8:3, 14-19. Once the people of Israel receive all their wealth, they must not “exalt themselves” but “humble themselves” before God. This leads into the specific *topoi* of Isaiah concerning “the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind” (Luke 14:13), which is a Lukan reconfiguration of Isa 61 and 35. Then Jesus asserts that “you will be blessed” (Luke 14:14), which is a reconfiguration of the assertions about being blessed

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<sup>23</sup> Willi Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric in Luke 14* (SNTSMS 85; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

both in Deut 7:13-14 and Isa 61:9. In response to a man who said, “Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!”, Jesus responded with a parable that emphasizes once more the Lukan reconfiguration of Isaiah with a command to “bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame” (14:21). Luke 14:1-24 presents the highpoint of Jesus’ encounter of the Pharisees with the Deuteronomic-Isaiah program of redemption. Jesus’ statements at the third and final dinner in a Pharisee’s house make it clear that “household” activity is “public” activity that must meet the test of justice and love, which combines emphases in Deuteronomy with emphases in Isaiah, rather than a test of friendship among the wealthy.

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#### **4. Luke 15: Seeking and Saving the Lost**

When the Lukan story reaches Luke 15, another *topos* moves into the center: seeking and saving the lost. The socio-rhetorical resource for this *topos* is Ezek 34, where God’s word comes to the prophet in a context after the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple. After Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed, God’s people were scattered throughout the world. In this context, one must not only heal, but one must seek, find, and save the lost who are scattered hither and yon across the face of the earth. The words of Ezek 34:11-12, 16, responding to the abuse of the people by the leaders of Israel (Ezek 34:3-10), present a challenge to Israel that moves one step beyond the program of Isaiah:

11: For thus says the LORD God: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. 12 As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them, from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness.... 16 I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.

Rather than reciting some portion of Ezek 34 to the Pharisees and scribes who were “grumbling” at Jesus’ welcoming and eating with tax collectors and sinners (Luke

15:1-2), Jesus recites a parable that enacts the central *topoi* of Ezek 34. In a context where even one sheep is lost, a shepherd will leave the flock and seek it until he finds it (Luke 15:4). When he finds it, he will rejoice, because he has found the one who was lost (Luke 15:6). The setting for the parable (Luke 15:2) and the ending statement by Jesus (15:7) renew the *topos* of “sinfulness” in Jesus’ first dinner in the house of a Pharisee (7:37, 39, 47-49). Still concerned with “sinfulness,” the Pharisees and scribes grumble at Jesus’ activity, this time at his acceptance of tax collectors and sinners rather than with one specific sinful woman. Occurring immediately after Luke 14, Jesus’ description of the “one sinner who repents” evokes an image of a person who is “humble” rather than “exalted” (14:11). With the image of the “shepherd” seeking the lost one, a new *topos* emerges in the midst of the Deuteronomy-Isaiah program, and the primary socio-rhetorical resource for this *topos* is Ezek 34.

After telling the parable of the shepherd with a hundred sheep, Jesus turns to a woman with only ten silver coins. Losing one of them, she lights a lamp, sweeps the house, and searches carefully until she finds it (15:8). At this point, she calls her friends and neighbors together to rejoice, since she has found the coin that was lost. Once again, then, Jesus introduces wealth, or the meagerness of wealth, as a *topos*. The woman exemplifies a person to whom wealth is not abundant. As she rejoices with others over the coin that was lost, she moves the *topos* of sinfulness (15:10) one step toward the issue of wealth, or the lack of it.

Luke 15:1-32 begins with the *topos* of property and the dividing of property among sons. In a context where the younger son “sins against heaven and his earthly father” (15:18, 21) by wasting all his possessions (15:13-14), he returns to his father. The result of the repentant return is the bestowal of gifts of wealth and celebration by the father. This story reconfigures the commands to Israel in Deut 6—8 through the *topos* of seeking and saving the lost in Ezek 34. The father embodies the attributes of a shepherd who will “rescue” (Ezek 34:12) and “feed” (34:13-14) the lost, “bring back the strayed and bind up the injured” (34:16) rather than simply “clothe himself” (34:3), while failing to “bring back the strayed” (34:4). The parable of the prodigal son, then, exhibits a father who embodies the attributes of the shepherd God asks people to be in Ezek 34, rather

than the attributes of the shepherds who abuse their people and fail to seek them out when they are lost.

Luke 16—18 elaborate, amplify, and integrate the *topoi* of Deuteronomy 6—8 and Isaiah in a context oriented toward the seeking and saving of the lost. Luke 16:1-8 focuses on a manager of money and follows with an elaboration that ends with the assertion that one cannot serve God and wealth (16:13). The *topos* of “serving God,” we recall, is central to Deut 6 (cf. 6:13). The chapter continues with a description of the Pharisees as “lovers of money” (16:14), and when Jesus tells them that “God knows their hearts” (16:15), the story is developing *topoi* central to Deut 6—8 in this new context. The parable of the Rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31) ends with an appeal to “listen to Moses and the prophets” (16:31), the parable of the Widow and the Unjust judge features a God who will “grant justice to his chosen ones who cry out” (cf. Isa 1:17), and the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector paradigmatically exhibits, as mentioned above, the principle from Deut 8:2-3 about the necessity to humble oneself (Luke 18:14). The story of the Rich ruler who came to Jesus, knowing the commandments (Luke 18:20; cf. Deut 6, 8), yet being unwilling to sell his possessions and give the money to the poor (Luke 18:22), sets the stage for a discussion of the relation of Jesus’ followers to possessions (18:28-30). Throughout all of this, the Lukan story explores how “those who are lost may be found” and “those who have wealth” may learn to “seek and save the lost.”

Luke 19:1-10 presents the climax of the section on seeking and saving the lost (15:1-19:10). Zaccheus, who is both rich (blessed by the standards of Israel) and a chief tax collector (lost to the house of Israel), welcomes Jesus into his house and explains that he gives half of his possessions to the poor and, if he defrauds anyone, he pays it back fourfold (19:8). When Jesus sees how this person, who is “lost” in the eyes of the Pharisees,

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embodies the attributes of a rich man who gives generously to the poor and corrects any injustice that occurs, Jesus pronounces him “a son of Abraham.” In Jewish tradition,

Abraham is the model of a wealthy man who remained generous all his life.<sup>24</sup> The story ends with Jesus' assertion that "the Son of man came to seek out and to save the lost" (19:10), recalling the *topos* he had introduced in the parable of the shepherd who, having lost one sheep, sought it until he found it (15:4). At this point in the story, the *topos* of seeking, finding, and saving the lost from Ezek 34 reaches its highpoint and conclusion before the transitional parable of the ten pounds that introduces the violent dynamics of the passion narrative in Luke 19:28-23:56.

### **Conclusion**

It is well known that the Gospel of Luke features Isa 61:1-2 at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, by having him recite it in his hometown synagogue in Nazareth. This essay has shown that the socio-rhetorical program of Luke really begins with Jesus' responses to the Devil in the context of being tested in the wilderness. The recontextualization of verses from Deut 6 and 8 in this context is an initial step in a program where Jesus will challenge the leaders of Israel in his day to fulfill not only the commandments of God in Deuteronomy but the reconfiguration of those commandments in the prophetic words of Isaiah and the healing actions of Elijah and Elisha. But even this is not enough. In Luke 15, Jesus' discourse introduces central *topoi* from Ezek 34 that move the program into the controversial action of "seeking and saving the lost." In Luke, then, social reform is not only a matter of seeking justice for the poor and downtrodden, it is also a matter of reworking one's stereotypes so that sinners, outcasts, and unacceptable people of all kinds are "sought out" for the purpose of finding them, welcoming them, and bringing them into the "houses" where God offers healing, inclusion, and salvation.

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<sup>24</sup> See, for instance, the *Testament of Abraham*.