

The Lucan Beatitudes and Woes: A Realised or Futurist Eschatological Reversal?

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Abstract

The theme of eschatological reversal is ubiquitous in the third gospel. Luke, however, appears to present the motif in a contradictory manner, localising it temporally both in the present and in the future. Such a dual characterisation of the eschaton is particularly true of Luke's Sermon on the Plain. This paper investigates three retentions of Q source material and four Lucan redactional changes which shed light on Luke's peculiar insight on the matter. Utilising redactional criticism, this study investigates how Luke preserves, rather than silences, the coexistence of both a realised and futurist eschatology present in his source. His redactional efforts further amplify the two temporal plains. Luke does not choose between the two. For him, eschatological reversal is both realised in the present *and* actualised in the future.

1. Introduction

The gospels exhibit two seemingly irreconcilable trends in the received tradition of Jesus' preaching and that of the earliest Christian community: on the one hand, the expectation of a future coming of the eschatological fulfilment of salvation, and, on the other, the present actualisation of this fulfilment in Jesus' *verba et facta*. The two trends have been respectively termed "realised eschatology" and "consistent, futuristic or thorough-going eschatology." The former, closely associated with Charles H. Dodd, holds the kingdom of God as entirely present in Jesus' person and ministry. This view maintains that the arrival of the eschaton had taken place fully in the ministry of Jesus. On the other hand, consistent eschatology, put forward by Johannes Weiss and

developed by Albert Schweitzer, argues that the kingdom of God as taught by Jesus is exclusively futuristic. According to this view, the eschatology of Jesus is apocalyptic, expecting the end of the world to occur soon after the death of Jesus himself. The aim of this paper is to analyse the theme of eschatology and how the two conflicting views associated with it come to bear on the Lucan rendition of the beatitudes and their accompanying woes within the wider discourse of the Sermon on the Plain. It will seek to answer the questions: is the eschatological import of the passage present or future oriented? If present, does it relate to the “now” of Jesus’ teaching or to the “now” of the Lucan community for whom the discourse was written? If it is, on the other hand, futuristic in nature, is it personal, temporal or apocalyptic? And if apocalyptic, is it imminent or delayed?

2. The Theme of Eschatological Reversal in Luke

A strong theological concern that repeats itself continuously throughout Luke-Acts, and an intentional compositional choice of the author, is “the great reversal” motif or, as Joel B. Green puts it, “the topos of transposition.”¹ The third gospel portrays God’s privileged concern for the lowly and outcasts: the poor, sinners, tax collectors, women, Samaritans, Gentiles, and the like. These are set beside and contrasted to their diametrically opposite counterparts: the rich, the pious, the mighty, and the insiders. Through divine reversal, the status and conditions of the two contrasting pairs are overturned: the mighty are cast down, the lowly lifted up. “Indeed, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last” (Luke 13:30). This bipolar reversal of fortunes, though not exclusive to this gospel or even to Jewish and Greco-Roman antecedents, is expanded and amplified as a rhetorical device by Luke, particularly in his parables: the sinful woman and the Pharisee (7:36-50); the Samaritan, the priest and the Levite (10:30-35); the prodigal son and the older brother (15:11-32);

¹ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 264. For a comprehensive treatment of the theme see Sung M. Hong, *Those Who Weep Now Shall Laugh: Reversal of Weeping in the Gospel of Luke* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2018), 1-16.

Lazarus and the rich neighbour (16:19-31); and the repentant tax collector and the pious Pharisee (18:10-14). The lowly, poor and outcast are set as models for Jesus' disciples to follow; the mighty, rich and religiously esteemed are contrariwise presented as examples not to be imitated.

These Lucan "last will be first" status reversals permeate the gospel. In its opening, Mary rejoices at how God "has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty" (1:52-53). Jesus himself announces in his programmatic inaugural address at Nazareth that the Spirit anointed him to bring the gospel to the poor, liberation to prisoners, sight to the blind, and release to the oppressed (4:18). God's visitation to such outcasts is perceived to be one of the signs that accompanies the coming of his kingdom. Indeed, when asked whether he was the expected one, Jesus replies that the blind, the lame, the lepers, the deaf, the dead and the poor were receiving salvation (7:22). It is to this underprivileged group that the great banquet is open (14:16-24). The esteemed guests first invited are refuted entry. Facing a similar predicament is the rich man (16:19-31). Lauding poor Lazarus who now receives his eternal reward, Abraham chastises his wealthy neighbour saying: "Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony" (16:25).

That Luke envisages the inevitable reversal of conditions and status is unquestioned. Whether the occurrence of such reversal is reserved for the present or the future is another matter. Indeed, the primitive Christian community shared the eschatological expectation in two ways: (a) they proclaimed the kingdom of God to be a hidden present reality in their midst, but, at the same time, (b) they associated the cataclysmic consummation of the age and the advent of the messianic age with the exalted and returning Christ. Luke captures the tension between both strands of thought and does not seek to set them in conflict.

2.1 The Eschaton as Present

Luke exhibits the habit of interpreting the history of Jesus and the Christian religious experience as partly fulfilling the expected eschatological event. He wraps his gospel in eschatological language so that the kingdom of God, while projected for the future, is also portrayed at the same time as present in Jesus' person and ministry. Luke acknowledges "the two-stage manifestation of the kingdom, and accents its manifestation in the present."² In one of the clearest statements that illustrates this, Luke stresses that "the kingdom of God is [ἐστίν] among you" (17:21); it is already in their midst and made manifest through messianic signs. This belief, not uncommon in Jewish literature, draws upon the conviction that many early Christians expected the consummation to be near. "They necessarily saw OT prophecy as looking forward to one grand event, not two. For them, everything was eschatological, that is, everything had to do with the end."³

2.2 The Eschaton as Future

When such imminent expectation did not materialise, Luke had to address the embarrassment that it caused. Scholarly debates in the last century produced two distinctive hypotheses. The more widely discussed of the two claims that Luke has introduced a theology of salvation history to explain the delay of the Parousia. The other thesis holds a shift in Luke's conception of eschatology: from horizontal and apocalyptic categories, to vertical and Platonic ones. This shift removes the consummation of salvation from the temporal future to a timeless sphere.

2.2.1 Imminence and Delay

With respect to the former solution, the central issue is not whether Luke anticipated an eschatological consummation. That point is made clear enough by a number of texts which speak of the kingdom of God as a future reality (11:2; 13:28-29; 14:14-15;

² E. Earle Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke*, 2nd ed. (London: Oliphants, 1974), 13.

³ Dale C. Allison, "Eschatology of the NT," in NIDB, 2, ed. Katharine D. Sakenfeld (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 295.

18:29-30). Rather, the real dilemma lies whether such eschatological consummation belongs to the near or distant future. Indeed, Luke inconsistently emphasises both the imminence and the delay of the end. Aware of the problem raised by a delayed Parousia, Hans Conzelmann holds that Luke redacted his sources to eliminate or suppress the earlier expectation of an imminent end in favour of a consummation located in the indefinite future. According to this view, dubbed as the theory of *Heilsgeschichte* (“salvation history”) the Parousia loses its dominating force and is relegated to a far distant future.

This view is reinforced by clear instances within the gospel which appear to omit or tone down the nearness of the end in Mark (Mk 1:15 and Lk 4:15; Mk 9:1 and Lk 9:27). In 17:20-21, the kingdom of God is already “among you” and will thus not come with any outward signs. In 19:11-27, Jesus narrates the parable of the ten pounds because his audience “supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.” Yet Luke also includes several sayings from his sources which emphasise that the end is near: John the Baptist speaks of an imminent eschatological judgment (3:7-9.16-17), Jesus proclaims the imminent arrival of the kingdom (10:9.11; 21:31), suggests the end to occur within the generation of his hearers (9:27; 21:32) and likewise announces the coming of the Son of Man (17:22-37). David E. Aune concludes: “Luke has not completely shifted eschatological expectation from a near to a distant future, and there is a strong emphasis in Luke-Acts that promised eschatological events have been partially fulfilled.”⁴

2.2.2 Personal Eschatology and the Intermediate State

Another aspect of Luke’s response to the problem of a delayed Parousia is the view that the great eschatological reversal comes with death. This marks a transformation from a macrocosmic to a microcosmic eschatology, from the end of the world to the end of the individual with its ensuing judgment and entry into heaven or hell. The result is that, as Jacques Dupont illustrates, the

⁴ David E. Aune, “Early Christian Eschatology,” in AB, 2, D-G, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 605.

futureeschatological salvation becomes closely associated with the after-death, even more than with the Parousia. For Luke, the fate of the individual is sealed at death (Lk 12:16-21; 23:43; Acts 1:25; 7:59) and he envisages no intermediate state. This is the assumption of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31) which takes for granted both an afterlife and post-mortem reward and punishment. Similarly, to the good thief on the cross, Jesus promises: “today you will be with me in Paradise” (23:43), and Stephen utters with his last breath: “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59). In Luke-Acts, the future expectation of the end-time is, in some way, overshadowed by individual deaths. As Charles K. Barrett observes:

Luke saw that for the individual Christian death was truly *an ἔσχατον* (though not *the ἔσχατον*) ... Thus the death of each Christian would be marked by what we may term a private and personal *parousia* of the Son of man. That which was to happen in a universal sense at the last day, happened in individual terms when a Christian came to the last day of his life.⁵

3. Eschatological Reversal in the Beatitudes and Woes

Few other passages in Luke capture the theme of eschatological reversal as well and as thoroughly as the beatitudes and woes in Luke's Sermon on the Plain (SP). Considered by most to constitute the *exordium* within the larger rhetorical structure of the SP, the passage divides itself neatly into contrasting parts: four parallel beatitudes (vv. 20b-22) and four woes (vv. 24-26). This division separates humankind into two groups: poor and rich, humble and proud, responsive and unresponsive. The internal structure of the passage is set in such a way that the middle two members of each set (v. 21a and v. 25a; v. 21b and v. 25b) describe present conditions that will be reversed in the future. The outer statements in each set (v. 20b and v. 24; v. 22 and v. 26), on the other hand,

⁵ Charles K. Barrett, “Stephen and the Son of Man,” in *Apophoreta: Festschrift für Ernst Haenchen*, edited by Walther Eltester and Franz H. Kettler (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1964), 35-36.

describe present conditions paradoxically transformed by the perspective of the kingdom. At the closure of the two-halves of the subunit in v. 23 and v. 26, those who are rejected by humans are being accepted by God, while those who are accepted by humans are compared to false prophets. Between the two halves lies an appeal for joy (v. 23) that provides an eschatological reason for the promise of the kingdom of God in the present (vv. 20c and 22a) and in the future (v. 21b and c). The verse, having no corresponding statement after the woes, thus acts as a hinge between the two sections. Within this structural setting, the present and future aspects of the Lucan eschatological reversal of fortunes are clearly at play. The aim of this study is not to present each and every editorial change brought about by the author of Luke-Acts to his sources. Rather, the study will pinpoint specific instances where eschatological underpinnings are noticeable, drawing reflections on whether such instances are present or futuristic in their eschatological import.

4. Luke's Retention of Q Source Material

When the Matthean beatitudes (5:3-12) are placed alongside the Lucan, the agreements between the two are striking. This suggests an apparently older Q tradition, the common source that Matthew and Luke each reproduced or revised in their own ways. Some, including Hans D. Betz, maintain that these differences are not due to the respective evangelist's redactional activity, but can be accounted for by the use of diverse recensions of Q (Q^{Mt} and Q^{Lk}). The fact that Luke has four beatitudes and Matthew nine, has been explained by some, notably Dupont and Joseph A. Fitzmyer, as constituting Lucan omissions. This view is unconvincing.⁶ More sustainable is the view that the other five macarisms found in Matthew (5:5.7.8.9.10) are Matthean additions rather than Lucan omissions. Compared to its Matthean counterpart, Luke's SP exhibits the tendency of faithfully adhering to the Q-beatitudes in their basic form. Three retentions are particularly interesting in

⁶ See Clifard S. Ranjar, *Be Merciful Like the Father: Exegesis and Theology of the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6,17-49)*, AnBib 219 (Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2017), 53-54.

their localisation of eschatological reversal in the present-future dynamic:

4.1 Possessing the Kingdom

In the first beatitude, the poor are called blessed because the kingdom of God *is* (ἐστίν) *already* theirs. The use of the present indicative in this beatitude, shared by the fourth beatitude (ἐστέ in v. 22) and the corresponding first woe (ἀπέχετε in v. 24), is awkward given the futuristic nature of the succeeding two macarisms. Scholarly opinion is divided as to whether the verb should be understood to mean the present reality or the future expectation. Robert H. Gundry captures the conundrum by means of a paradox: “They have yet to possess it, but they already own it.”⁷

Some scholars emphasise the present nuance of the beatitude.⁸ They maintain that this beatitude is not a promise, as in the following beatitudes, but a statement of fact. Yet most concede that “the Kingdom is not yet theirs in its fullness; and those elements which are not yet possessed are promised in the Beatitudes which follow.”⁹ Other interpreters have argued that the verb should predominantly be read as a futurist present.¹⁰ Still

⁷ Robert H. Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament: Verse-by-Verse Explanations with a Literal Translation* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2010), 250.

⁸ See Frédéric L. Godet, *A Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1875), 313; Jacques Dupont, *Il Problema Letterario: La Buona Novella*, vol. 1 of *Le Beatitudini* (Roma: San Paolo Edizioni, 1973), 674-686; Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Luke*, 5th ed, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981), 180; Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, 2nd ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988) 210; L. John Topel, *Children of a Compassionate God: A Theological Exegesis of Luke 6,20-49* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2001) 86-87; Llewellyn Howes, *Judging Q and Saving Jesus: Q's Contribution to the Wisdom-Apocalypticism Debate in Historical Jesus Studies* (Durbanville: AOSIS, 2015) 115-116.

⁹ Plummer, *A Critical*, 180.

¹⁰ See John L. Nolland, *Luke 1-9,20*, WBC 35A (Dallas: Word Books, 1989) 283; Christopher F. Evans, *Saint Luke*, TPINTC (Philadelphia: SCM, 1990), 329.

others refuse to commit to any of the two sides.¹¹ They maintain that ἔστιν can represent a timeless construction in Aramaic so that its meaning is extended from the present into the future. For I. Howard Marshall “the kingdom is so near that the disciples as good as experience it now, or that there is a sense in which they already experience it, even though the rewards associated with it belong primarily to the future.”¹² Likewise, François Bovon synthesises the tension between present and future by affirming that ἔστιν designates three things for Luke: a future collective expectation of the kingdom of God, a present ecclesiological beginning of the community of goods among Christians, and a future individual source of consolation for the poor in the afterlife.¹³

This intermediate solution is tempting, yet we believe that the verb should be skewed in favour of a present nuance. Llewellyn Howes’ critique of the futurist interpretation is enlightening.¹⁴ He highlights three main shortcomings which make this understanding highly unlikely: (a) the syntactical context usually makes obvious the use of the present tense to refer to a past or future action, (b) the verb ἔστιν here functions as a gnomic present, and (c) there are no other examples of futurist present verbs in the Sayings Source Q. We would add two more observations. Firstly, a futurist interpretation assumes an Aramaic origin. While some scholars entertain this probability, others postulate a Greek *Vorlage*.¹⁵ The alternative solution which provides for the use of Greek recensions of an Aramaic Q source is not without its problems.¹⁶ Such doubts concerning the Aramaic provenance of Q makes the attribution of

¹¹ See I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 250; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1,1-9,50*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994) 572; François Bovon, *Luke: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1,1-9,50*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 225.

¹² Marshall, *Gospel*, 250.

¹³ Bovon, *Luke*, 228.

¹⁴ Howes, *Judging Q*, 115-116.

¹⁵ For a discussion on the debate concerning the original language of Q see Christopher M. Tuckett, “Q (Gospel Source),” in AB, 5, *O-Sh*, edited by David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1106-1112.

¹⁶ For a critique of this view see Charles E. Carlston, “Betz on the Sermon on the Mount. A Critique,” *CBQ* 50/1 (1988): 47-57; Ranjar, *Be Merciful*, 55-56.

the verb ἔστιν as progressive in force owing to its Aramaic origin, debatable. More importantly, Dupont argues that the verb pertains to the Greek formulation of the beatitude given that Aramaic lacks copular verbs.¹⁷ Secondly, the consistency of the Matthean and Lucan tradition in giving a present tense translation emphasises the currency of the possession of the kingdom. The fact that Luke transmits this verb unchanged shows, at the least, that it was not objectionable to him. If it had been, he would have redacted it. Luke generally has no scruples in adapting his source to fit his theories. He carefully alters the most intricate of details from his sources to fit his purpose. He would have had no qualms, therefore, in changing the verb from the present to the future tense if the latter were what he intended. Indeed, the alteration of Q's present imperatives (χαίrete and ἀγαλλιᾶσθε) into aorist imperatives (χάρητε and σκιρτήσατε) exhibits Luke's marked interest in refining the linguistic style and nuances of different tenses. If Luke intended a future orientation for the first beatitude, he would have undoubtedly replaced the verb ἔστιν from his source to ἔσονται.

4.2 The Retention of Future Verbs

The inverse is true of the future tense verbs Luke preserves from his source. The first and last beatitude and their corresponding woes occur in the present tense, but the middle two portray a future reversal of a present condition. Those who hunger and weep will (one day in the future) be filled (χορτασθήσεσθε) and laugh (γελάσετε). Likewise, those who are full and laugh now will hunger (πεινάσετε), mourn (πενθήσετε) and weep (κλαύσετε). This future orientation has been the subject of much scholarly debate.

Most scholars would agree that such verbs ought to be interpreted in an eschatological, otherworldly sense. Betz argues, for instance, that "the future tenses in SP/Luke 6:21-23 paint the verbal picture of an eschatological meal of joy comprising the

¹⁷ Dupont, *Le Beatitudini*, I, 681-682.

consumption of good food, laughter, and dance.”¹⁸ Others disagree and favour a this-worldly interpretation, denoting “the immediate future of daily existence for which corporeal survival and personal happiness are important.”¹⁹ Robert H. Stein maintains that “this banquet already is anticipated and realized in part, as Luke 9:15-17; Acts 2:42-47; 20:7-11 suggest.” Yet he concedes that fulfilment of such reversal “is primarily future, as the divine passive and the future tense indicate.”²⁰ L. John Topel is of like conviction. Reflecting on the verb χορτασθήσεσθε, he asserts that “6:21a, in spite of its future tense, carries the same combination of temporal/eschatological reward as does 6:20, because the Reign of God is present and active.”²¹ Another this-worldly interpretation transfers the future temporally in between the gospel present and the eschaton. Alfred Plummer sees in the verb πεινάσετε “a partial and literal fulfilment when Jerusalem was reduced to starvation in the siege.”²² Frédéric L. Godet sees the same great national catastrophe as the realisation of this malediction. He, however, also allows a post-mortem understanding arguing that the terms πεινάσετε and κλαύσετε “contain an allusion to the privations and sufferings which await, after death, those who have found their happiness in this world.”²³

Two pairs of alternatives are thus postulated. Should the future tenses be understood as this-worldly (as realised in the present or the immediate historical future), or other-worldly (after death or at the end of time)? In our opinion, the latter is the more plausible option for the same reason for which the present verb ἐστίν ought not to be interpreted futuristically – if Luke had any objection to the future tenses he found in his source, he would have made the necessary alterations, changing the future tense verbs into the present. Moreover, we believe that, given Luke’s lack of distinction

¹⁸ Hans D. Betz, *Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3-7,27 and Luke 6:20-49)*, Hermeneia. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 577.

¹⁹ Howes, *Judging Q*, 115.

²⁰ Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, NAC 24 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 201.

²¹ Topel, *Children*, 101.

²² Plummer, *A Critical*, 182.

²³ Godet, *A Commentary*, 317-318.

between fulfilment after death and at the eschaton, no preference ought to be accorded to any one of these two options.

4.3 “For Surely your Reward is/will be Great in Heaven”

Similarly, enigmatic is the causal clause ἰδοὺ γὰρ ὁ μισθὸς ὑμῶν πολὺς ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ in v. 23b. It is almost unanimously rendered in translation in the present: “for surely your reward *is* great in heaven” (NRSV). Such an interpretation is justified by its affinity to the fourth beatitude. Given that the verse ends with a conclusion similar to the last woe (v. 26), some have incorporated it within the structure of the fourth macarism. Since the latter emphasises the present dimension, the phrase, they claim, ought to be interpreted as referring to the present. Others, however, have noted that apart from its conclusion, the verse has no corresponding woe and should thus be treated extraneously from the context in which it is found. This understanding allows for the elided future copula ἔσται instead of ἐστίν: “for great *shall be* your reward in heaven.”²⁴ Indeed, this is the tense utilised in an identical axiom a few verses down in the SP: ἔσται ὁ μισθὸς ὑμῶν πολὺς (v. 35).

The phrase thus appears to be polyvalent. On the one hand it appears to be a present statement of fact. On the other it is perceived as a future eschatological promise. Some ascribe to the first opinion. Darrell L. Bock states that “the reference is to a promise of present, heavenly vindication.”²⁵ Likewise, Frederick W. Danker emphasises the present consequences of the phrase, arguing that these words are not intended to motivate the conduct of their hearers through expectation of a reward, but should be conversely interpreted as consolatory.²⁶ There is no future reward of heavenly kingdom to be had since it is already possessed – “in any event, the Kingdom of God in all its fullness is theirs.” While

²⁴ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke: Introduction, Translation, and Notes I-IX*, AB 28 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1981), 625.

²⁵ Bock, *Luke*, 581.

²⁶ Frederick W. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age According to St. Luke: A Commentary on the Third Gospel* (St. Louis: Clayton Publishing House, 1972), 83.

recognising that the saying focuses on the present, Howes admits that some sort of futurity is implied. He locates this future reward not in an apocalyptic, but in a post-mortem scenario for “if the prophets had received their reward before the apocalyptic end, so will the followers of Jesus.”²⁷ Breaking away from any present realisation of this reward, Bovon distances the reward further into an apocalyptic future. He argues that the term μισθός designates a payback, compensation, or reward, and should thus be interpreted as “the eschatological restitution proclaimed already in the other beatitudes.”²⁸ Between the two contrasting views, Gundry takes an intermediate position. He argues:

“In heaven” doesn’t mean you’ll get your reward in heaven. It means your reward is already in heaven waiting for you to get it when Jesus comes back to earth (Acts 1:9-11). The reward is signed and sealed but not yet delivered. So there’s a futuristic reason to rejoice. There’s also a historical reason.²⁹

Q: A Realised or Futurist Eschatological Reversal?

From the above analysis three main trends may be deduced. Some seek to flatten the temporal dimension, either to the present (by questioning the validity of future tense verbs) or to the future (by questioning the validity of present tense verbs). Others, in an effort to find a compromise, seek to reconcile both. We, however, contend that the tensions inherent in the text should be maintained not solved, for if the author of Luke-Acts should have intended to prefer any alternative, he would have redacted his source to suit his intentions. Luke’s redactional choices elsewhere in this passage suggest he was not averse to such changes. Instead, he exhibits no desire for specification of the intended temporal plain here.

It seems that Luke faithfully follows his source in its resistance to privilege either the present or the future in its temporal/eschatological framework. Scholars have not always recognised the symbiosis of both dimensions in Q and have attempted to

²⁷ Howes, *Judging Q*, 114.

²⁸ Bovon, *Luke*, 228.

²⁹ Gundry, *Commentary*, 250.

overemphasise one period of time to the detriment of another. David Seeley, for instance, claims that the Q community originally held “an outlook devoid of futuristic eschatology” and that such a viewpoint only appeared “as a late development within the trajectory of the group behind Q.”³⁰ By contrast, Christopher Mearns upholds that Q has “a consistently futurist eschatology.”³¹ He assumes that first generation Christian eschatology was primarily realised, and second generation Christianity was predominantly futurist. The intent of the Q writer was that of “rejecting the first generation’s established realized eschatology and supporting a consistent futurist eschatology at the beginning of second generation Christianity.”³²

These extreme views fail to grasp the complexity of Q’s relationship between present-realised and futurist apocalyptic eschatology. Q does not sacrifice the present reality to the future kingdom, nor does it emphasise the present kingdom to the detriment of the future kingdom. Despite the two trends’ incongruence, “the Sayings Gospel does, nonetheless, accept and promote both a futurist and an apocalyptic eschatology.”³³ For Werner G. Kümmel there is no sense in claiming that, in the nascent community of Christian believers, there arose a development from a purely present-realised eschatology to a futurist eschatology. Nor is the obverse to be held true – that the earliest Christianity looked only to the imminent future, and that only gradually there came about a consciousness of the presence of the eschaton. “Instead, both for Jesus and for the earlier primitive church, the main proclamation from the beginning consisted in

³⁰ David Seeley, “Futuristic Eschatology and Social Formation in Q,” in *Reimagining Christian Origins: A Colloquium Honoring Burton L. Mack*, edited by Elizabeth A. Castelli and Hal Taussig (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), 152.

³¹ Christopher Mearns, “Realized Eschatology in Q? A Consideration of the Sayings in Luke 7:22, 11:20 and 16:16,” *SJT* 40/2 (1987): 189.

³² Mearns, “Realized Eschatology,” 209-210.

³³ Howes, *Judging Q*, 124.

pointing to the impending saving advent of God and the appearance of his anointed from heaven.”³⁴

In the Lucan beatitudes, neither one of the two opposing trends has been forfeited despite the author’s efforts at logical harmonisation in other sections of his gospel. This proves that the dissonance between realised and futurist sayings was not held to be offensive by the author. Rather, Luke’s redactional efforts in this passage further reinforce this position.

5. Luke’s Redactional Changes

The Lucan redaction of his Sayings Source (Q) in this passage exhibits a number of characteristics: he introduces direct address to make the macarisms more emphatic; his choice of words and specification of the subject make the text linguistically elegant; he stresses the present reality without deviating from the eschatological perspective; the present human condition, as opposed to the Matthean metaphorical and spiritual language, is reinforced; Luke emphasises eschatological reversal; and his woes place greater emphasis on the dichotomy between the rich and poor. Four features are particularly attractive in terms of their eschatological import.

5.1 From the Mountain to the Plain

One of the most remarkable differences between the Matthean Sermon on the Mount and the Lucan SP is the place where Jesus preaches this sermon. Matthew locates his sermon on the mountain (5:1) while Luke locates it on a level place (6:17). Many solutions have been devised to explain away the dissonance in topographical setting.³⁵ Of these, we find Jindřich Mánek’s interpretation to be particularly intriguing. Through an investigation of several passages in Luke’s gospel, he maintains that the author, in contrast with Matthew, exhibits an aversion towards mountains. For Luke it is unthinkable to place Jesus’ sermon on a mountain since “neither

³⁴ Werner G. Kümmel, “Futuristic and Realized Eschatology in the Earliest Stages of Christianity,” *JR* 43/4 (1963): 311.

³⁵ For a comprehensive discussion on the matter see Ranjar, *Be Merciful*, 18-21.

mountain nor sea in Luke's expectation will share in the coming age, where only level ground will exist."³⁶ This anchors Luke's conception of eschatology firmly in the present-realised temporal frame of reference.

5.2 Choice of Vocabulary

The beatitudes and woes found in the third gospel exhibit distinctively Lucan vocabulary. Two intertwined motifs underlying his choice of language can be deduced. The outer present beatitudes and their corresponding woes have commercial undertones: the possession of the kingdom of God by the blessed poor (v. 20b) who are to expect a great reward in heaven (v. 22); and the reception of consolation by the woeful rich (v. 24) who are well-esteemed for their wealth (v. 26). Luke reinforces the tension between the μισθός ("reward") promised to the poor in the future and the present ἀπέχετε ("you have received") of the wealthy. The latter technical term signifies the cashing in of a payment and the issuing of a receipt for a sum owed. The term was used in receipts to indicate that the person had accepted full payment of a debt, and so that he had no further claims on the debtor.³⁷ The rich have already amassed their comfort and thus received all that they are ever going to get; they have already been compensated for whatever they may have suffered.

The middle beatitudes and woes, set in the future, exhibit another theme. "The underlying reference is probably to the 'messianic banquet', the picture of the kingdom of God in terms of a great feast where men can have fellowship with God at his table."³⁸ The poor are to expect a reversal of their fortunes as they are to become privileged guests in the future eschatological banquet characterised by full stomachs (χορτασθήσεσθε; v. 21a) and laughter (γελάσετε; v. 21b), as well as merriment and dance (χάριτε and σκιρτήσατε; v. 23). The rich, inversely, are to expect an inverse fate: empty stomachs (πεινάσετε; v. 25a), mourning and

³⁶ Jindřich Mánek, "On the Mount – On the Plain (Mt. v. 1 – Lk. vi 17)," *NovT* 9/2 (1967): 131.

³⁷ See Mt 6:2.5.16.

³⁸ Marshall, *Gospel*, 250-251.

weeping (πενθήσετε and κλάυσετε; v. 25b). The substantivised perfect participle ἔμπεπλησμένοι (“who are full”) denotes a present state of affairs resulting from a completed action in the past. Having already been filled in this earthly life, the woeful rich are not to expect being filled again in the next.

Through his choices of vocabulary, particularly in his woes, Luke frames the present in earthly commercial jargon and the future in the otherworldly terminology related to the eschatological banquet. The nuances in both cases set the tone for his conception of reversal in the present and the future.

5.3 “Now”

The adverb νῦν (“now”) occurs in the second (v. 21a) and third (v. 21b) macarisms and the corresponding woes (v. 25a, 25b), but absent in the first and fourth beatitudes and the corresponding woes. This fourfold emphasis is certainly the result of Lucan interpolation. Indeed, the term is synonymous with the evangelist who uses it 14 times in Luke and 25 times in Acts.³⁹ In Matthew it is found in four instances and three in Mark. Bovon observes a threefold purpose in the insertion of this little word: “chronological distance until the fulfilment, a limitation of suffering, and a sharpening of the present paradox.”⁴⁰ The third is particularly significant. Placed conspicuously at the end of each of the four middle beatitudes, the adverb “now” serves to bring out explicitly the greatness of the reversal that God will perform from the conditions of this age to the rewards of the age to come – the “then” as the time of divine satisfaction. It also highlights the fact that “the reward of the first beatitude and woe are in the present, while the rewards in 21b, 21d, 25d are rewards in an eschatological future.”⁴¹ This eschatological future, for Dupont, does not pertain to the end of times but to the end of the

³⁹ Of these, some exhibit signs of Lucan redaction, the adverb being added to the Marcan text (see Lk 22:18 // Mk 14:25; Lk 22:69 // Mk 14:62).

⁴⁰ Bovon, *Luke*, 226.

⁴¹ Topel, *Children*, 60.

individual at death.⁴² Whichever interpretation is favoured, the NT $\nu\tilde{\nu}$ is, in literal terms, a transitional time between two times: the beginning of the new aeon and the end of the old. As Gustav Stählin notes: “for those who live in this period the present is both a ‘still’ (still in the old aeon) and an ‘already’ (already in the new), and each is characterised by antithesis, whether to the new or to the old.”⁴³ The “now” of the Lucan beatitudes accentuates this antithesis, bringing to the fore the tribulations which typify the present (characterised by ostracism, abuse and slander) overshadowed by their future reversal. This reversal clearly does not reside in the “now” of the present situation, where $\nu\tilde{\nu}$ does not merely refer to the historical present of the man Jesus upon whose lips the adverb is placed, but also transposed to the historical present of the Lucan congregation in the third stage of gospel formation. In Luke, as in the other gospels, history is experienced as the present.

5.4 In Which Day?

The phrase ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ (“in that day”) in v. 23 is another Lucan redaction. The majority of scholars understand this addition as corresponding to Luke’s insertion of $\nu\tilde{\nu}$ in vv. 21 and 22, and therefore stressing the present reality.⁴⁴ The phrase alludes to the times or occasions eliciting hostile response spoken of in the previous verse. The change from the present imperative χαίρετε (“rejoice”) to the aorist χάρητε seems to suggest an ingressive aspect, as rejoicing is initiated at the very moment (“in that day”) in which persecution comes. As against Heinz Schürmann who holds that the phrase refers to the day of exclusion from the synagogue, Marshall contends that “Luke has in mind a definite point of time” and specifies that “a more general reference to any

⁴² Jacques Dupont, *Gli Evangelisti*, vol. 2 of *Le Beatitudini* (Alba: San Paolo Edizioni, 1977), 151-228.

⁴³ Gustav Stählin, “ $\nu\tilde{\nu}$,” in TDNT, 4, A-N, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), 1114.

⁴⁴ See Dupont, *Le Beatitudini*, I, 349-350; II, 155; Fitzmyer, *Gospel*, 635; Jan Lambrecht, *The Sermon on the Mount: Proclamation and Exhortation*, GNS 14 (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1985), 73; Nolland, *Luke*, 285; Stein, *Luke*, 203; Bock, *Luke*, 580-581; Gundry, *Commentary*, 250; Bovon, *Luke*, 227.

day of persecution is probable.”⁴⁵ Without denying the present temporal reference, few others, on the other side of the spectrum, interpret the phrase apocalyptically as denoting the eschatological Day of the Lord.⁴⁶

In our opinion, Betz best captures the dilemma. He allows the appeal to joy to be interpreted in view of both the present time (“Be joyful in that [same] day and leap about!”) and the future time (“Be joyful in that [eschatological] day [of the Lord] and leap about!”). He maintains that “the phrase ‘on that day’ refers to the well-known eschatological expression” but at the same time acknowledges that “the promise of eschatological joy in the eternal kingdom of God does not exclude an anticipated joy here on earth. On the contrary, it is the motivation for such earthly joy.”⁴⁷ We believe Betz’s effort at harmonising the phrase’s time reference encapsulates the author’s addition of this intentionally ambiguous phrase. Such temporal duality should not be eliminated but enhanced, given Luke’s attempts elsewhere in his work to refine his received tradition and make it more logically plausible and sound.

L: A Realised or Futurist Eschatological Reversal?

These redactional efforts demonstrate that, just as his source, Luke does not skew his perspective of eschatological reversal to any one of the two temporal plains. He emphasises the present/realised irruption of the kingdom by his localisation of the sermon on a plain. He stresses the future expectation by his insertion of the adverb νῦν juxtaposing the “now” of present earthly reality with the “then” of future reversal. His intentionally ambiguous phrase ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ leaves both options open to interpretation. Moreover, his vocabulary choices clothe the present eschatological vision in earthly commercial jargon and the eschatological future in banqueting terminology. Both dimensions are preserved from the source and amplified by redaction.

⁴⁵ Marshall, *Gospel*, 254.

⁴⁶ Evans, *Saint Luke*, 331; Uriel Rappaport, “Sermon on the Mount/Plain,” in AB, 5, *O-Sh*, edited by David Noel Freedman, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1110; Topel, *Children*, 110.

⁴⁷ Betz, *Sermon*, 582.

6. Conclusion

In Luke's beatitudes and woes, eschatological reversal is not solely realised in the present. It is neither merely actualised in the future. Nor is it progressive, inaugurated now but reaching its ultimate fulfilment sometime in the apocalyptic future. Rather, reversal is both present *and* future. The present-future temporal plain is not mutually exclusive but encompasses both. This is the tradition Luke receives and the tradition he preserves and expands. The present dabbles between the Christ event and the "now" of the Lucan community; the future between a post-mortem and apocalyptic (delayed rather than imminent) end. The eschatological time of salvation is an experience of the present, but it is also an anticipation for a forthcoming eschatological completion. Both are fused into a composite view shared by the nascent Christian community.