

2009

Strategies and Themes of Luke

Center for Catholic Studies, Seton Hall University

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Summer 2009

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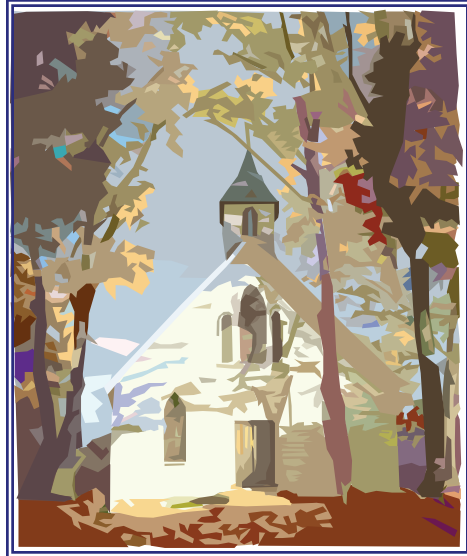
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“Strategies and Themes of Luke”



**2009 Summer Seminar
Center for Catholic Studies
Seton Hall University**

CENTER FOR CATHOLIC STUDIES

Faculty Summer Seminar 2009
Strategies & Themes of Luke

Presenter: Rev. Anthony Ziccardi, S.T.D., S.S.L.
Executive Director of Mission and Ministry



Luke is perhaps the most professorial of the gospel writers. He begins his two-volume work by explaining his intention: having thoroughly investigated the life of Jesus and his earliest disciples, he proposes to compile an orderly account that will help his student Theophilus ascertain the truth of the instruction that he had previously received. Luke then proceeds throughout the gospel and Acts to recount both the deeds and teachings of Jesus and his emissaries from Jerusalem to Rome. Didactically minded, he composes a work eminently accessible to those of Hellenistic culture who know something about Judaism. Luke's work is still accessible nearly 2000 years later — with a little effort. The down-to-earth quality and many surprises of Luke's gospel made it the choice for Seton Hall's signature "Journey of Transformation" syllabus.

Father Anthony Ziccardi, in his own down-to-earth way, will provide commentary on the major interests and themes of Luke. All faculty, especially teachers of Core 1, are invited to apply.

Anthony Ziccardi is Executive Director of Mission and Ministry here at Seton Hall. A faculty member in the School of Theology, and former Associate Dean, he received his licentiate in Sacred Scripture (S.S.L.) from the Pontifical Biblical Institute and his doctorate in Biblical Theology (S.T.D.) from the Pontifical Gregorian University, both in Rome. His dissertation was on the kingdom of God in Luke-Acts. Known for his keen insights, he has been enjoyed by the faculty as a retreat director and as a commentator in the University Seminar on Mission.

How to apply: The seminar is open to all full-time faculty. Participants will receive a stipend of \$300.00 for the seminar. Participating faculty will be expected to discuss the text and to write a short article about the topic from their own perspective and discipline. These articles will be collected and disseminated on-line. Articles are due eight weeks after the end of the seminar. Fifteen faculty will be accepted for the seminar, preference being given to those who have not participated in the past. Apply by indicating your interest to Anthony Scigliano, Religious Studies Department, at sciglian@shu.edu tel. 973-761-9544. Deadline for indicating interest is May 1, 2009.

This seminar is co-sponsored by the Center for Catholic Studies and the Center for Vocation and Servant Leadership.

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The Construction of Authority in the Gospel of Luke

Mary McAleer Balkun

This year's Catholic Studies seminar, with its goal of examining the strategies and themes of Luke, was very much consonant with the way I teach, especially in literature classes. The material we received—both for the seminar and in preparation for teaching *The Journey of Transformation*—introduced a number of recurring themes and tropes, such as the act of sharing meals and the journey motif. For example, meals of all kinds fill the Gospel: wedding feasts, public gatherings where Jesus provides food for those who have followed him, and, ultimately, the Last Supper. Christ even proves his resurrected humanity by eating “a piece of grilled fish” (Luke 24:42). Travel is a recurring activity in the Gospel: the journey Mary makes to visit her pregnant cousin, Elizabeth; the travels of Christ, especially his journey back to Jerusalem, which eventually leads to Calvary; and the related journeys of the disciples, who take to the road in order to spread Christ's teaching.

One way to engage students in a close reading of a text is to ask them to examine the opening paragraph for symbols, images, tropes, and themes that can then be traced throughout the work. The opening lines of Luke's Gospel are rich with information that can lead to a better understanding of the author's goals and strategies. In particular, they introduce the concept of “authority,” a theme that runs throughout the text and is related to others, including the kingdom of God. The notion of authority not only frames Luke's Gospel, appearing in both the opening passage and the final sections, but many of the events recounted speak to questions of authority: who has it, why, and how they choose to use (or abuse) it. Over the course of the Gospel there is a gradual shift in the source of authority: from the traditional and accepted—the Pharisees, the scribes, the wealthy, the powerful—to Christ and those he celebrates in his parables and sermons—the poor, the humble, the contrite, and all those who have chosen to believe in him and his message. While the Gospel is addressed to someone named Theophilus, this figure also represents all those who would like an ordered accounting of the events of Christ's life and teaching. The crux of that teaching is the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth, and

both the creation of that kingdom and its guardianship require new forms of authority. A careful examination of the text can help students see Luke's rhetorical strategy in the Gospel, which is to establish Christ's authority as chief representative of the kingdom of God on earth as well as the authority of those who continue to carry forth the message of that kingdom, including Luke himself.

The Gospel of Luke begins as follows:

Seeing that many others have undertaken to draw up accounts of the events that have reached Their Fulfillment among us, as these were handed down to us by those who from the outset were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, I in my turn, after carefully going over the whole story from the beginning, have decided to write an ordered account for you, Theophilus, so that your Excellency may learn how well founded the teaching is that you have received. (Luke 1:1-4)

In this single (very long) sentence, Luke establishes a pedigree for his narrative (the “many others who have undertaken to draw up accounts of the events that have reached their fulfillment among us”), his authority as writer of the text (one who has gone over “the whole story from the beginning”), the authority of his sources (which are the production of “eyewitnesses and ministers of the word”), and his relationship to his audience (one in a position to educate someone of high rank and probably of some authority himself, Theophilus). In fact, the relationship between author (Luke) and audience is embedded in the notion of authority, in particular the author's control of his materials and his ability to persuade. Not coincidentally, it is the ability to convince others that is one of the major characteristics of Christ in Luke's Gospel.

One of the early examples in the Gospel of this changing nature of authority occurs when John the Baptist—who is preparing the way for Jesus—is asked by tax collectors and soldiers how they should behave. Rather than telling them to leave their occupations and take up new ones, John tells the tax collectors to “Exact no more than the appointed rate”

and tells the soldiers “No intimidation! No extortion! Be content with your pay!” (Luke 3:13 and 14). He then explains that “someone will be coming, who is more powerful than me” (Luke 3:16). Just as John the Baptist’s claims pave the way for Jesus and help to establish his authority early on, so does the recounting of Jesus’ ancestry, which connects him through figures such as Judah, David, and Abraham back to Adam. It is also embedded in Scripture, which he uses to counter the temptations of the devil, beginning each statement with “Scripture says....” Given this pedigree, then, it is little wonder that when Jesus begins to preach he impresses others. Luke specifically points out that this is because “his word carried authority” (Luke 4:32), and he references others, who talk about Jesus as one who “gives order to unclean spirits with authority” (Luke 4:36).

In addition to speaking with authority, Jesus lays claim to unprecedented forms of authority for man, such as the power to heal and to forgive sins. This is, course, blasphemy to the scribes and Pharisees, who argue that only God can forgive sins. Jesus responds by curing a paralyzed man, but his gesture does more than solidify his ability to forgive sins: it also connects him to God, from whom the power to forgive sins emanates. The intersection of God and Jesus can also be seen in the episode of the Gerasene demoniac, when Luke writes that Jesus instructs a man from whom he has cast devils to “Go back home and report all that God has done for [him].” Instead, Luke writes, he returns home to “[proclaim] throughout the city all that *Jesus* had done for him” (my emphasis) (Luke 8:39).

Jesus has authority in his own right, but he is also able to pass that authority on to others, a necessity if his ministry is to continue beyond his time on earth. He calls together the disciples and “[gives] them power and authority over all devils and to cure diseases and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal” (Luke 9:1-2). He also tells them (and Luke tells the reader) in the subsequent chapter that “Anyone who listens to you listens to me; anyone who rejects you rejects me, and those who reject me reject the one who sent me” (Luke 10:16). This construction mirrors the earlier passages about Jesus’ lineage, including the disciples in the line of descent, with a direct link back to God. However, the disciples must also learn the proper use of their newfound authority. Treated badly by

those in a Samaritan village, James and John ask Jesus whether they should “call down fire from heaven to burn them up?” (Luke 9:54). Jesus “rebuke[s] them” (Luke 9:55) and, as if to continue the lesson, the next section is about the hardships of the apostolic calling: those who agree to follow Christ must do so without looking back, not even to bury their dead. There is a price to be paid for access to God’s authority, as Christ himself knows only too well.

Just as Jesus’ authority among the people is becoming more firmly solidified, however, it is also being more openly questioned by those whose authority he is usurping. When the scribes, priests, and elders ask Jesus, “what authority have you for acting like this? Or who gives you this authority?” (Luke 20:2), Jesus refuses to reveal the source of his authority, instead telling the parable of the wicked tenants, which infuriates the scribes and priests even further. This episode highlights another element of Jesus’ authority: that it comes in part from the people he has come to save. In various episodes, the love and loyalty of the people prevent others from attacking him while their stories also advance his reputation and growing renown.

Although Jesus may seem to lose at least some of his authority in the fact and manner of his death—mocked and hung with criminals—it is only confirmed by the way in which he faces the end: asking God to forgive his murderers and forgiving the criminal who has faith in him. The inscription on his cross—“This is the King of the Jews” (Luke 23:38)—is both mockery and truth, a designation that is affirmed at the moment of his death: a centurion declares, “Truly, this was an upright man” (Luke 23:47), while those who witness his death “[go] home beating their breasts” (Luke 23:48).

The Gospel of Luke traces the gradual but steady accrual of Christ’s authority until the ultimate exercise of power: his bodily resurrection, as opposed to just the continuation of his spirit. In his final meeting with the disciples, and in a rhetorical move that brings the narrative full circle, Jesus reiterates and expands upon his place in the line that includes Moses and the Prophets: he is not just the next in a line of prophets, he is the fulfillment of the scriptures. In turn, his power will be extended to the disciples, who will be “clothed with the power from on high” (Luke 24:49), which will enable them to continue to advance the kingdom of God on earth.

Taking students through these various episodes—and there are others as well—can help them to see the way Luke structures his Gospel in order to achieve a very specific response: a shift in one’s understanding of the nature and locus of authority. As part of a course that examines transformative experience, Luke’s Gospel describes not only the change within those who follow Christ in his lifetime but also the changes that must occur if the kingdom of God on earth is to become a reality.

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The journey in context: the juxtaposition of the physical and mental journey as represented by Jesus' journey in Luke.

Beth Bloom

The Seton Hall faculty designed the Journey of transformation Core 1101 course “to forge a community of conversation inspired to explore perennial questions central but not exclusive to the Catholic intellectual tradition” (SHU Core Curriculum statement). They chose course texts, films, and discussion topics to help students tackle existential, moral, and religious issues as they confront the inevitable changes wrought by the first year college experience. In order to achieve this outcome, the course designers selected readings that contain, among others, one major common ingredient, a journey to self-discovery. The ubiquity of this element not only defines the course, but also affords the students an opportunity to understand their own journeys during the reading and discussion process.

Luke's Gospel is an integral part of Core 1101. It establishes and/or reinforces themes central to the Catholic intellectual tradition and, coincidentally, is centrally located in the syllabus, as it is introduced right around mid-semester break. Luke incorporates the concepts of journey, transformation, the search for the truth, commitment to God, and martyrdom, philosophically mirroring the lessons contained within other course readings.

One of the first course texts, Plato's *Symposium*, takes place during a dinner party, in which we witness a virtual excursion through the various concepts, representations, and definitions of love. This philosophical journey contrasts with the static physical placement of party goers, who are either seated or reclining. Participants express their individual perceptions and descriptions of love, which range from worship of the material world to adoration of truth and wisdom-- from Aristophanes' description of a people initially consumed by ambitious, deleterious, self love to Pausanias' speech about selfless, servile love devoid of artifice. Ironically, in this room replete with beautiful young men, the greatest love object is the purportedly unattractive Socrates, who possesses the ultimate goal of the love journey—wisdom—a wisdom often attained through a species of time travel. Here lies the often contradictory nature of his intellectual growth process. He was

known to have stood in one place for hours in deep concentration while solving a philosophical problem, this particular habit of his symbolically representing the juxtaposition of the virtual and actual journey.

Later in the semester, the students encounter Saint Augustine, who traveled from the Numidian hills in North Africa to Milan, to Carthage, and then on to Rome. His journeys can certainly be seen as a foil to his ultimate transformation while seated in a garden. His initial voyages were “made with no element of Christian motive, without any questioning for God or truth,....” (Augustine xxi). When he was a student in Carthage, he enjoyed the pleasures of life and rewards resulting from his extraordinary intellect. However, he was also influenced by his mother's desire for him to live a spiritual life. This tension certainly fueled the inner conflict eventually resolved while passing through stages of anguish, discovery, and decision.

The culmination of this conflict occurred in a garden where he reevaluated his early life as a libertine and Manichean, lover of astrology and Platonism. This, in truth, was the beginning of Augustine's own journey of transformation into a life of abstinence and devotion to God. While in the garden, distressed that he could not surrender his will to the covenant with God, he decried, “But to reach that destination one does not use ships or chariots or feet.....The one necessary condition, which meant not only going but at once arriving there, was to have the will to go,” i.e., to will his passage through his anguish into the arms of God (147). Augustine's resistance was a function of fear of the unknown and lack of trust in his ability to commit faithfully to chastity and asceticism, given his past life. Nevertheless, he understood that if God would love and accept him for who he is, he could surely discover love for God in his own heart. “You also, merciful Father, rejoice ‘more over one penitent than over ninety-nine just persons who need no penitence’(Luke 15:4)” (Augustine 137). Augustine surrendered to his new life and to God when he finally understood that the love of God, for him, was the most genuine and satisfying form of love.

Ironically the journey encountered in the Bhagavad Gita requires a different form of logic—it is a dia-

logue between the intellect and the ego, and its elements are self contradictory. The warrior Arjuna, of the Pandavas clan, prepares for battle against the Kauravas, evil cousins; but suddenly he hesitates. He is worried that if he fights and kills, many brave brothers and kinsmen will die. He will not do the right thing, or be “good.” He puts his weapons down and begins to worry about the meaning and goals of existence and his own life. He dreads the results of his actions on the battlefield. He is stuck; his inaction manifested in the fear and anxiety that incapacitate him. His confidante and charioteer, Krishna (God), teaches him that he agonizes unnecessarily. His duty as warrior trumps all other concerns. This is his karma. His concern over his own “goodness” is ego centered and will not lead to the ultimate good. He must not worry about the results of his actions, because in honoring his karma he represents a good from which all benefit. All is one-- a part of a greater Self, or God-universe, all of which can neither be created nor destroyed.

The true meaning of Arjuna’s existence is to achieve the Bliss that results from seeing himself as part of the greater universe and, in so doing, approaching oneness with God. In order to achieve this, Arjuna must find his way through a journey of self discovery -- and Krishna will be his guide. Krishna is a charioteer, the implication of which is that he travels through space. Paradoxically, in Hinduism, there is no time or space. The chariot is existence, our body. The horses that drive the chariot are our senses. Arjuna might be the master of the horses in that he controls the reins, which represent the mind or intellect, but the reins are there to restrict the horses, or the senses, the very same senses that overcome his control of the reins. Arjuna’s ego, albeit his emotion, has overpowered his intellect. The battle-- the true, primal, internal battle-- begins. Through his self discovery he can find the way to surrender his need for material reward, such surrender being a precursor to ultimate Bliss.

The similarity with Augustine, and hence Luke, here is uncanny. Both Augustine and Arjuna appear to fear that a commitment to God will come at the cost of material wealth and security. In Luke 12:22, Jesus says that one must “not keep striving for what you are to eat and drink, and do not keep worrying. For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, strive for his kingdom,

and these things will be given to you as well.”

It is no accident that Jesus’ life represents the ultimate journey of transformation. The journey is a defining force in his life--from his parents’ need to find an appropriate birthing place to his final terrible walk to the tree of his execution. But beyond this, his holy presence is a manifestation of the symbolic juxtaposition of the inner and outer journeys. As a child Jesus travels with his family every Passover to the temple in Jerusalem. In his twelfth year he determines not to return home with his parents and remains in the temple to study. Thus, his journey begins and will ultimately end in Jerusalem, but not before he travels to Judea, Samaria, to coastal Palestine, in order to fulfill his mission as an emissary of God.

Throughout his travels, Jesus teaches, heals and inspires others. His message is clear and uncompromising: “but woe to you, Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and herbs of all kinds, and neglect justice and the love of God; it is these you ought to have practiced, without neglecting the others.”[Luke 11:42]. He is secure and at peace in his commitment to justice and to love of God. But how did Jesus come to understand his purpose and to accept his fate? Did he struggle with inner turmoil, confusion, or self-doubt?. Ultimately, the journey to self-discovery is traveled within the circumscribed space of our minds. And this instance is no exception. Jesus confirms his commitment to God as he struggles and starves in the wilderness for forty days, repeatedly tempted with food and the promise of power. Indeed, “the ultimate goal of Jesus’ journey is God, not Jerusalem” (Sweetland 110). Undeniably, Jesus follows his final path, a potent lesson for all, culminating in his ascension to heaven.

In all the above examples, the protagonist must meet and follow himself through his own personal agonizing journey to self discovery and decision. Luke magnifies this essence many times over by memorializing how Jesus, by way of his teaching and by example, leads others through their own journeys to find God--how his demeanor, determination, and sense of duty must-- and do--exemplify his sense of mission, throughout his travels. In the *Bhagavad Gita* Krishna describes many who are: “Self-centered, stubborn, filled with all the insolence of wealth, they go through the outward forms of worship, but their hearts are elsewhere” (par. 16.17. 172). Jesus recognizes this in the Pharisees. In

Plato's *Apology*, Socrates says that the unexamined life is not worth living (41). Jesus, as well, has recognized this hypocrisy in so many who have unexamined lives. But unlike Plato, he believes those lives are worth saving, and that through his teachings, many will examine and transform their lives. Through their genuine love of God, they will find salvation.

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Luke's Gospel and the Fulfillment of the Promise of Grace

Nancy Enright

Note: this paper is based on the Catholic Studies Seminar, led by Fr. Anthony Ziccardi, in May of 2009 and also on a conversation held several weeks afterward with some good friends and colleagues, all of whom participated in the seminar and were reflecting together on it and the links between the Hebrew Scriptures and Luke's Gospel.

Luke begins his Gospel with two birth narratives, the first about the birth of John the Baptist and the second about the miraculous conception and birth of Jesus, the Messiah. Each story involves an annunciation (to Zachary, the father of John, and then to Mary, the mother of Jesus), and each of them expresses their joy in a prayer of praise and gratitude to God. Looking at each of these prayers carefully can help in understanding a pervasive theme covered in the seminar – the Jewish roots of Luke's Gospel – since the prayers express a deep sense in which the coming of the Messiah and John, his fore-runner, are the fulfillment of the promise of grace present throughout the entire Bible and emphasized in Luke's Gospel. It is a mistake to view the “God of the Old Testament” as a vengeful, harsh God of law, contrasted with the “God of the New Testament,” Jesus, who is all love. Though certainly the Hebrew Scriptures include stories of God's judgment (the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Gen. 13 and the killing of the Amalekites in Exodus 17 and elsewhere, to name two key examples), it is important to remember that they also include countless references to the mercy and forgiveness of God. The entire New Testament presents Jesus, not as a “new” God, but as the incarnation of the God known by the people of Israel for centuries, a more personal and deeper revelation of this God, yes, but the same God. The love embodied in Jesus and in His teachings, particularly as seen in Luke's Gospel, is the fulfillment of the love expressed by God throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, and the prayers of Zachary and Mary, in their exultant joy, look back to those Scriptures, as well as ahead to the fulfillment of them through the incipient coming of the Messiah.

If Luke's Gospel can be seen, as Fr. Ziccardi our seminar leader presented it, as a book steeped in Jewish heritage, the first place to look for a sense of this heritage would be in the words of Mary, the

mother of Jesus, who, in a sense, represents personally the fact of Israel's giving birth to Christianity. Her beautiful prayer is traditionally called the “Magnificat” (“it –i.e. My soul – praises or exalts”; literally, “makes great” the Lord) because that is its first word in Latin; in English translation, Mary says, “My soul exalts the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior” (Luke 1: 46-47). Her prayer celebrates exultantly the raising up of the humble, the poor, the disenfranchised, as represented by herself, over the proud, the rich, and the powerful (Luke 1: 50-53). A key theme of Mary's prayer is the great mercy of God, her sense of it rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures, as she echoes Psalm 103:17: “the lovingkindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him and His righteousness to children's children.” God's lovingkindness is connected with faith in an ongoing community, with each generation passing on the knowledge of God and His love to the next. This strong sense of the mercy of God permeates Mary's prayer, and it is deeply connected, for her, with a belief in the covenantal relationship between God and the people of Israel; Mary ends her prayer by recalling the specific nature of the Lord's mercy to her people: “He has given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his offspring forever” (Luke 1:54-55).

Mary's prayer echoes a similar song of praise spoken by another mother-to-be in the book of First Samuel, Hannah, the mother of the prophet Samuel. Long unable to conceive a child, Hannah has been miraculously enabled to become pregnant in answer to her desperate prayer for a son, whom she promises to dedicate to the Lord. Like Mary, Hannah exults in God's great mercy toward the humble, the poor, those lacking in power: “He raises the poor from the dust, He lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with nobles and inherit a seat of honor” (1 Sam. 2: 8). Also, like the Magnificat, Hannah's prayer includes references to the proud and the powerful being “thrown down” through the power of God, though – unlike Mary, who focuses particularly on the nation of Israel overall, Hannah focuses on the coming king, whom God will “anoint.” The links between the two prayers of the

two faith-filled women are very powerful, and they both rejoice, above all, in the mercy of God expressed through the coming births of their children, destined to fulfill His plan.

A similar sense of God's mercy, rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures and linked to the miraculous and unexpected conception of a child, is expressed in the prayer and prophecy of Zachariah, described in Luke 2, upon the birth and circumcision of his son, John (who will become "the Baptist"). Zachariah's and Mary's prayers are linked because Mary speaks her song of praise while staying in the home of Zachariah and Elizabeth, her relatives, and upon being greeted by the pregnant Elizabeth, who acknowledges powerfully the miracle that has occurred in Mary's life and, to a lesser degree but still importantly, her own. Zachariah, unlike the two women, was at first unable to believe that the Lord was really going to answer his and his wife's long-standing prayer to have a child. Now, past-childbearing, Elizabeth was, he felt, "too old," as he was himself. Mute since the vision of the angel whose word he at first doubted, Zacharia receives back his ability to speak upon the naming of his son, and speaks his prayer of praise as a prophecy concerning the role his son will play as the forerunner of the Messiah. Like Mary's prayer, Zacharia's song of praise reflects a deep-seated awareness of God's mercy, as revealed through His relationship with His people Israel. The coming Messiah, whose herald Zacharia's son will be, will fulfill the promise inherited in the grace-filled dealings of God with His people: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant – as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old... to show mercy toward our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to Abraham our father" (Luke 1: 68-73). Like Mary, he also focuses on God's mercy as he prophesies his child's future role, "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways; to give to His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, with which the Sunrise from on high shall visit us to shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1: 76-79). His prayer links his son with Elijah, echoing

Malachi 4:2, 5-6: "But for you who fear My name the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.... Behold I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse." This prophecy, already quoted by the angel Gabriel in his annunciation of John's birth to his doubtful father, connects with the later linking of John with Elijah by Jesus Himself: "If you care to accept it, he [John] himself is Elijah, who was to come" (Matt. 11:14). Healing, restoration, peace are the outflow of the great mercy of the God of Israel, revealed anew through His Son, Jesus, and His prophet, John, who fills the role of a new Elijah.

This sense of continuity with regard to the mercy of God is important in understanding the New Testament, over all, and Luke's Gospel in particular. An awareness of the ever-increasing sense of God's mercy enjoyed by the people of Israel from the time of Abraham, but deepening over the years, is carried on in Luke's Gospel, on nearly every page of it. It is not as if God's mercy itself increased over time, but perhaps the human ability to understand and to receive it did. Jesus' remark, "if you care to accept it," concerning John's role as a new Elijah, may reflect a larger sense in which we can receive only as much of God's mercy as we are willing and able to receive. The culmination of the revelation given to Israel, as reflected in Luke's Gospel, is mercy – an ultimate revelation that goes beyond that given to Jesus' forbears, but remaining very much in the spirit of it.

Still within the first part of Luke's Gospel, the Presentation of Jesus in the temple involves the affirmation of Jesus' identity through two prophetic voices, Anna's and Simeon's. Simeon prays to God about of the future of the young Jesus, calling Him "a light of revelation to the gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel" (Luke 2:32), echoing several passages in Isaiah, such as the following: "The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them" (Is. 9:1). A similar concept may be also found in two other passages in Isaiah. In the first of these, the Lord promises, "I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand

and watch over you, and I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon, and those who dwell in darkness from the prison" (Is. 42:6-7). Later on, when Jesus and John are both grown, Jesus' assurance to the imprisoned John the Baptist will echo these signs of the Kingdom of God in His description of His own ministry: "Go and report to John what you have **seen** and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Luke 7:22), a description that echoes Isaiah 35 and 61 as well. Meanwhile, in the same chapter of Luke that includes the presentation, the finding of Jesus in the temple, besides being a very human story of anxious parents and a missing child, also conveys a sense of Jesus' own awareness of His role and ministry, when He asks them, "Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?" (Luke 2: 49). The three days He is missing, mentioned by Mary as having been filled with anxious searching for Him, point forward to Jesus' three days in the tomb prior to the resurrection and also backward to the three days the prophet Jonah was in the belly of the great fish. Jesus Himself connects His ministry with the story of Jonah and the mercy of God toward both Ninevah and the reluctant prophet, referring to His ministry as the "sign of Jonah": "This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation" (Luke. 11:29-30). In this passage, Jesus' ministry is connected with the prophetic mission of Jonah, as it also is connected in Matthew 12:40, where Jesus also mentions the "sign of Jonah, as referring to His ministry and also, specifically, to His death and resurrection. As Jonah was released from the fish's stomach, so Jesus also will be released from death. Implicit also in the reference to Jonah is the redemption occurring after the prophet Jonah's release; when he does, in fact, preach to the Ninevites and they repent, God forgives them, much to Jonah's chagrin. Upset also that the plant giving him shade has dried up, he angrily sulks about the mercy of God, saying to Him: "O Lord, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in

love, a God who relents from sending calamity" (Jonah 4: 2). Like many of us, Jonah is far less merciful than God, who gently explains how, in the same way Jonah had "mercy" on the plant that died, how much more should the Lord have had mercy on the great city of Ninevah (Jonah 4: 11). All of these interwoven links would be deeply meaningful to the readers of Luke's Gospel, whether Jews or God-fearing gentiles, and they would clearly see the implicit and at times explicit connection between the merciful God of Israel and Jesus, His incarnate Son. Not knowing or appreciating these references from the Hebrew Bible takes away from the richness and depth of Luke's text.

All the references to God's mercy and forgiveness in the Hebrew Scriptures, as prototypical of the kind of love and forgiveness in Luke's Gospel, are too numerous to recount, though I will give a brief sampling of a few more key passages. Psalm 51, the great penitential Psalm of David written after his adulterous affair with Bathsheba, expresses his deep faith in the forgiving love of God: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions" (Psalm 51:1). Another ex-

ample would be the entire book of Hosea, which focuses on forgiveness, the merciful love of God mirrored by Hosea's endlessly forgiving love for his prostitute wife. Jeremiah's prophetic book, while including many warnings to Israel's erring kings, also includes passages of mercy and love, such as the following: "They will be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear me for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me. I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land with all my heart and soul" (Jer: 32: 38-41). In Jeremiah 33: 6-9 the Lord offers Israel a similar promise of loving forgiveness and restoration. In some prophecies, the blessings extend beyond Israel, suggesting a Kingdom of God for all people, as in the following passage from the prophet Zechariah:

Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gen-

tle, and riding upon a donkey, even upon a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle-bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. Zech. 9:9-10

Of course, for a reader of Luke's Gospel or the any of the synoptic Gospels, this passage will resonate with the description of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, recounted in Luke 19: 28-40, as well as in Matthew 21: 1-11 and Mark 11: 1-11. The peaceful rule of the gentle King extends to all the nations, though rooted in the blessings coming to a re-deemed Zion.

The overall theme of forgiveness, introduced in the first two chapters of Luke and linked profoundly with the Hebrew Scriptures, is carried over into Luke's account of the adult life and ministry of Jesus. Though the entire New Testament can be considered a book about forgiveness, Luke's Gospel particularly drives home this idea. For example, Luke includes Jesus' famous three parables of the lost being found (the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost – or “prodigal”—son; Luke 15), told in the context of Jesus' being criticized by the Pharisees for His receptivity toward “tax-gatherers and sinners” (Luke 15: 1-3). Luke also includes the parable of the two debtors, one who owes little and the other who owes much, and the Lord forgives them both, told in response to Simon the Pharisee's criticism of the sinful woman, who anointed Jesus' feet with her tears and was told by Him “Your sins have been forgiven” (Luke 7: 38-50, including the parable). Luke's Gospel also includes specific examples of how Jesus lived the forgiveness He taught, for example, as Fr. Ziccardi pointed out, the incident when Jesus and His disciples try to enter a Samaritan village, but they are not allowed to go into the town because they are heading toward Jerusalem; in other words, they are excluded from the town because they are Jews and worship differently from the Samaritans, the two groups being at enmity with each other. (“Jews have no dealings with Samaritans,” as the Samaritan woman says to Jesus when He asks her for a drink, John 4.) Luke does not emphasize the rejection, but instead uses the incident to make a point about Jesus' compassion. Angry at the Samaritans for rejecting them, James and John (the “sons

of thunder,” as they are called), ask Jesus if they should “command fire to come down from heaven and consume them,” no doubt enjoying some of the newly acquired spiritual authority the apostles now had. However, Jesus “turned and rebuked them,” explaining to them, “You do not know what kind of spirit you are of, for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them,” and the group went on to another, more accepting village (Luke 9: 51-56). Fr. Ziccardi pointed out, interestingly, that it is in the immediate context of this rejection and Jesus' correction of the disciples for their anger at it, that Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 30-37, the next chapter and “after this” in Luke's chronology), making a hated Samaritan the hero of the story, an exemplar of charity, so much so that the name “Samaritan” has come to be synonymous with someone who is kind or helpful to a stranger. How ironic and yet how perfectly in harmony with all that has gone before that Jesus turns what could have been a name associated with hatred of His people and personal rejection of Himself and His followers into a name associated with the very opposite of behaviors. The Good Samaritan offers his services to “a man,” and since the context of the story is the Jewish world of Jesus and His followers, this man is almost certainly a Jew, who – in the parable -- is not only not rejected by the Samaritan, but actively helped and loved by him. The seminar helped me to see that this parable is not just a story about reaching out to others, but about forgiveness, even in the face of overt hatred and persecution.

It is in the final moments of Jesus' life that the forgiving love of God incarnate in Him becomes most profoundly realized. Once again, though the entire New Testament connects Jesus' Passion and Death with forgiveness of sins, Luke's Gospel emphasizes this connec-

tion. During the arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, one of the disciples (John's Gospel tells us it was Peter) cuts off the ear of the high priest's slave. All four Gospels tell this story, but only Luke tells of Jesus' healing the slave's ear and saying “Stop, No more of this!” or as it may be alternatively translated (according to the New American Standard Bible), “Let Me at least do this”; the Douey-Rheims version has it, “Suffer ye thus far,” which might be interpreted either way. No matter which way the words are translated, Jesus' forgive-

ness and concern even for one of those who have come to arrest him are clearly manifested. During the account of the crucifixion of Jesus, once again, Luke's Gospel emphasizes His forgiveness. Only Luke, among the four evangelists, includes Jesus' prayer from the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23: 34). Though Matthew and Mark also mention the two other men crucified with Jesus, only Luke tells the story of the conversion and forgiveness of the person who has come to be called "the good thief." This man rebukes his fellow criminal for mocking Jesus, saying "...[t]his man has done nothing wrong," going on to make a request rooted in faith, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" Jesus, with what may have been almost His last breath, replies, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23: 41-43). This very personal act of forgiveness by Jesus is followed almost immediately by the veil of the temple being "torn in two," as told in Luke 23: 45, as well as in Matthew 27:51 and Mark 15:38. Why is this detail important? Again, it connects with an ancient part of Jewish heritage, mentioned in Exodus 36:32-33: "You shall hang up the veil under the clasps, and shall bring in the ark of the testimony there within the veil; and the veil shall serve for you as a partition between the holy place and the holy of holies. You shall put the mercy seat on the ark of the testimony in the holy of holies." Luke is telling us that by His death, Jesus is opening the way to the holy of holies, the place of meeting with God. This important fact, deeply significant to Luke's audience, is followed by Jesus' last recorded words before death, "Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit," quoting Psalm 31:5 exactly.

Luke's account of the resurrection of Jesus, as might be anticipated given his continual emphasis on forgiveness, rooted in the Hebrew scriptural roots of Jesus and His mission, includes the appearance of Jesus to two followers on the way to Emmaus, a story not told in any of the other Gospels. Here Jesus joins two of His grieving followers, one of whom is named Cleopas and the other left unnamed, on their way to Emmaus. Though they do not yet recognize Him, He explains what has just happened (i.e. His own death, which they are grieving) completely in connection with the Hebrew Scriptures. Jesus says, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!

Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" Then Luke tells us, "[B]eginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (Luke 24: 25-27). Then, joining them for a meal, Jesus is "recognized by them in the breaking of the bread" (Luke 24: 35), and the disciples are left in great wonder, saying: "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32). Note the emphasis on the Hebrew Scriptures and how Jesus explains His identity and mission in terms of them. Finally, though both Matthew and Mark also include a "Great Commission" in which Jesus charges His disciples to preach and to baptize throughout the world, only Luke includes mention of the Hebrew Scriptures and their fulfillment in Him and the specific phrase "forgiveness of sins":

Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24: 44-49)

From the beginning till the end of his Gospel, Luke tells the story of forgiveness, rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures. These Scriptures, treasured by Jesus' ancestors and immediate relatives (including His mother Mary and cousin Zacharia), revealed

over time a God of mercy and grace, “compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness,” who “has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities” (Psalm 103: 8, 10). The prayers of Mary and Zacharia, recounted in the first chapter of Luke’s Gospel, set the stage for the recurring and intertwined themes of the Lord’s forgiveness and His faithfulness to His people Israel that are crucial to an understanding of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. In Luke’s Gospel, grace is not a break with the past, but a fulfillment of a promise going back through the ages.

¹ These and many of the other cross-references are given through the very helpful concordance of the *New American Standard Bible*; Lockman, 1977.

The Person of the Christ from a Methodist-Catholic Perspective

Anthony E. Lee

The Messiah as described in the Books of Luke and its continuation, Acts of the Apostles, is a complex Being, both man and God. As such He has always held a singular fascination for me as a supplicant and sinner, and to my way of thinking not nearly good enough to approach the mercy seat at any time or in any fashion. Always bowing humbly at His feet with my eyes ever on my Savior and the Cross, I come to reflect on three of the more cogent points in the two part extrapolation.

First, the Being who is Christ, Joseph's son of the Household of David and Son of God, the Most High of Israel and the King of Kings. How he remains humble unto a death that He freely accepted for our salvation and for our eternal souls.

Secondly, how He was rejected by His own people and yet died for our sakes. How Jesus of Nazareth preached, healed, testified, and was ultimately rejected by his own kindred and yet triumphed over death and the grave.

Thirdly, there is the conversion of Zacchaeus and the parable of the lost who the Christ came to save and the ultimate embarkation of the Apostles to save and preach salvation to sinners. Acts is the beginning of the culmination of the age of redemption and the great missions work of the Apostle Paul, one of the iconic lions of the Church.

Beginning in Chapter 1, Luke, the Physician and traveling companion of Paul, delineates Christ the Son of Man, and the human-divine Person, whose genealogy he traces to Adam. Luke's narrative of the birth and infancy of the Lord is taken from the point of view of the virgin mother. Luke alone tells of Christ's boyhood and reveals more of his prayer life than any other Synoptics. Luke, therefore, is in many ways the Gospel of compassion, stressing the Lord's sympathy for the broken-hearted, the sick, the maltreated, and the bereaved. Luke opens with the dual pregnancies of the cousins: Elizabeth and Mary. The former pregnant with John the Baptizer, aka, the Baptist. The Latter pregnant through the intercession of the Holy Ghost, nee

Spirit, with the Christ. Both births were miraculous and show the power of a most high Divine being that is always on a different existence level than the ordinary human being. John is, by his very nature and birth, a divinely inspired life force who is predestined to be the way maker and precursor for the Messiah. As Isaiah foretold "A voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." John let it be known from the first that he was not the Messiah but one was coming "Mightier than I, the lachet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose." "He will baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." This then is the same Being who when John, his cousin, baptized Him in the River Jordan, the Holy Ghost descended from Heaven in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from that Same heaven saying "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased." Christ then is tempted by the Satan after fasting in the desert for forty days. He resists three acts of temptation by Lucifer and is afterwards attended by Angels who feed him as he prepares for his three year mission in Galilee. Next the Christ embarks on his mission of teaching, healing, converting, and preaching in the Synagogues of Galilee and throughout the region. This is shown by Luke through parables, stories, and adventures. All the while being mindful of Jesus' divinity. His overall divine authority humbly rendered.

First we notice whom He chooses to convert to his life altering way of faith. They are mostly the uneducated, so-called working men and laborers. Most of these are fishermen, sheep herders, and common farmers. People used to working with their hands. Christ does not call the Scribes nor the Pharisees. He has come to call the common man to repentance. These will be his "New Church" and will serve as a stumbling block for the "wise and high minded" who are ultimately conceited. The rich also will have no place in the kingdom and are not automatically granted entrance at the "Last Trumpet" through their money or exalted station in life.

Secondly, He heals, casts out devils, and brings to life the dead in body and spirit. Jesus regularly heals Palsy, Leprosy, Blindness, Cancer, and Insanity. He makes the lame to walk and the paralyzed to stand. Jesus makes water into wine at Cana, cures the Gadarene Demoniac, raises the widow's son from the dead, walks on water, calms a sea tempest by His Word, raises Lazarus from the dead, restores sight to the blind beggar, feeds five thousand with three loaves and two fishes, and heals the 10 lepers. Jesus tells many Parables and teaches the way to salvation through belief in the Son of God, Himself. He is the way, the truth, and the Light only through Him are men saved. His is the only sinless life. He is the only perfect man.

In the the last year of his three year ministry, Jesus enters Jericho and makes a very important convert, Zacchaeus, the chief among the pulicans and very rich. When I was a young lad I heard a sermon in Darby, PA, a suburb of Philadelphia. It was delivered by an elderly Methodist minister, Rev. Charles Napper, on the theme of the saving of Zacchaeus. Rev.Napper had a booming voice and a dramatic delivery. Remember, this was about 50 years ago and I recall it vividly, still. The Rev. set the stage theatrically by relating Zacchaeus' small stature and his inability to see Jesus because of the press of the crowd. Being very curious he ran ahead and climbed into a sycamore tree to see as He passed. Reverend Napper boomed: "Looking up He saw him and said, Zacchaeus make haste and come down for today I must abide at your house." "That very day was true salvation come to a sinners abode and his whole family was saved." "He thus said to the Master: behold I give half my goods to the poor and if I have taken anything by false accusation I return it fourfold." Jesus further seized the moment to answer the crowd who were murmuring, saying, that He was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. Jesus said "This day is salvation come to this house, for so much as he also is a Son of Abraham." "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Here begins the rock of my faith and the beginning of my spiritual journey. I have always valued my personal friendship with Christ, although I am still attempting to emulate my Master. Mine is

not a perfect walk but I am still endeavoring to be more Christ-like. Whenever I wanted anything I have always gone directly to God in prayer and have not used intercession, or praying through an agent.

When I was a student I was traveling by car and the throttle on the engine stuck open so I could not brake, or throttle down. I panicked and prayed for guidance on what to do. God answered me and told me to shut off the engine, which I did. Then I started again and this time the throttle had closed. I was able to continue my journey safely. To me this was my Damascus road. I always think of St.Paul on the road to Damascus and being knocked to his knees by Jesus in the form of a blinding light. He was on his way to persecute the Church and Christ converted him and recruited him to be a lion for the Lord. Paul went from virulent Christ -hater to Messianic Disciple. As a zealot Paul shares the "stage of Acts" with Peter, known as the "Rock" of the Early Church and the first Pope. Peter, or Petrus, the Rock, while, maintaining the Deity of Jesus("God hath made that same Jesus whom ye hath crucified, both Lord and Christ"), gives special prominence to His Messiahship. Paul, fresh from the vision of the glory, puts emphasis on his deity. Peter's charge was that the Jews had crucified the Son of David. Paul's that they had crucified the Lord of Glory. The salient point was not that the Christ was God, a truth plainly taught by Isaiah, but that Jesus, the crucified Nazarene, was the Christ and therefore God the Son. Acts of the Apostles, therefore, brings into focus the God-Head Troika: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. As well as giving a running history of the Early Church in detail with all the Apostles carefully sketched and developed.

Luke, the physician, with a scientist's practiced eye gives scope and a clear vision to the life of Christ, especially early and throughout his three year ministry. He then carefully delineates the history of the early church up to Paul's arrival and early ministry in Rome. His intention is not to render a conclusion but more to sketch a beginning of the Church on a physical level but more importantly on a spiritual level. Luke more or less raises the curtain on the Age of the spread of the "Good News" and bridges the time gap to the Pauline Books.

Approaching Luke's Gospel from the Perspective of Statistics and Research Methods

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On the surface, it seems unlikely that Luke's Gospel or the Acts of the Apostles would relate to the courses that I teach most frequently: Statistics and Research Methods. After all, these are math courses and the Bible is not the typical source for a textbook. In contrast, many of the parables, similitude, and interactions are examples of concepts that are central to the experimental psychologist's view of the world. Specifically, one way to approach the Gospel is by considering that the events are of interest because they are statistically unlikely. The same approach is used by scientists that interpret data based on null hypothesis testing.

Before discussing some of the examples of unlikely events, a brief introduction to null hypothesis testing seems warranted. Most psychological (as well as other scientific) research centers on the idea of a null hypothesis that is to be rejected before deciding if a drug, therapy, memory manipulation, or any other experimental treatment was successful. That is, researchers begin a study assuming that all therapies are the same or that both a placebo and a drug will be equally efficient at improving memory. Of course, this is not what a researcher predicts (or often *wants* though such words are usually thought to be inappropriate for a scientist), but rather is the default assumption until sufficient evidence is obtained that the treatment groups did differ on some outcome measure. As an example, suppose a drug reduces anxiety on a scale of emotional intensity by 5 points relative to a placebo group. On the surface, this seems sufficient to conclude that the new drug works. However, hypothesis testing requires that the chance of that reduction be less than a probability determined before the study is conducted (usually between a 1% and 5% chance). If the odds of the new drug leading to a 5 point reduction were .003% by chance, then one concludes that the drug worked. If the odds were 15%, then one concludes that the drug is no more efficient than a placebo. Thus, hypothesis testing relies on results that are *statistically unlikely* or *unusual*. This approach allows a set criterion at which to risk that an effect will be wrongly attributed to a cause instead of chance.

One way of thinking about the events in Luke are as examples of statistically unlikely events. The very beginning of the Gospel gives an example of expectations of what normally happens when naming a child. When Zechariah stated he was naming the baby John, people were surprised as normally a family name would be chosen – “But no one in your family has that name, and made signs to his father to find out what he wanted him called.” 1:62-63). To use such a name was a statistically unlikely event and this led people to take notice.

Naming was not the only unusual event early in the Gospel. Both Mary and Elizabeth's pregnancies were unlikely and for opposite reasons – the former due to youthful innocence and the latter due to years of unsuccessful attempts. Neither Elizabeth nor Zechariah expected that age would bring a child to their home based upon both their own failed attempts as well as what would have been their experiences in life – infants are gifts to the young not the old. Consequently, the conception was an unlikely event. In contrast, when Gabriel says “For nothing is impossible to God” (1:37) to Mary, a clear line is drawn between the acts of humans and the acts of God. In statistics, no possible event is without probability. Some probabilities are very low (e.g., bearing a child when well past the age of prime fertility) but no event is without probability. God, however, does create or change the world in ways that do not have a defined probability. Impossibility, which is the most extreme example of statistically unlikely, becomes reality.

Similarly, the parables are rich with unlikely events. For example, when Jesus healed the ten lepers (17:11-19), both this healing and the response were unlikely. The healing was unlikely because skin diseases did not typically disappear and were rather untreatable at that point in history. Having an unlikely event with such a positive outcome made the acts of miracles distinct and noteworthy. In addition, one can also consider the probability associated with failing to return in thanks. From a statistical perspective, if odds of staying or returning are equal (50/50) then the chance of one person returning is

only 1% using the binomial distribution – a distribution of probabilities for events having two possible outcomes. This makes the event surprising and worthy of note in the opposite direction of the positive effect of the miracle. Certainly the lepers must have been surprised at the outcome and returning in thanks would have been of little effort. By making obvious opportunities to give thanks to God statistically unlikely, the Gospel sends the message that a life of faith is not automatic or easy.

The contrast between improbable events and the similitude help to highlight the difference between Christ acting in a way that was surprising and in a way that was the standard. In the story of the Lost Sheep, which was written such that this was how anyone would behave: leaving to find one sheep even if it means risking the others was phrased as something normal to do? In this example, what sounds like an unusual event is actually phrased as the null hypothesis – or default state of the world. Again, this may have been an attempt to contrast how the ways of the world, which are rooted in probability, differ from those of the divine, which are rooted in God.

A final collection of evidence that suggests that Christ was statistically unlikely comes from the number of Old Testament predictions that are said to have come true in the life of Christ. A person holding one, two, or possibly even three characteristics of the Messiah or fulfilling this many prophecies would not be unlikely (just like it is not out of the realm of possibility for a coin flip to land on heads three times in a row), but the sheer weight of the number of completed prophecies suggests that chance alone could not explain the coincidences (much like a coin landing on heads 1000 times in a row).

There is good evidence that humans naturally seek out probable and improbable. If one goal of the Gospel is to persuade, the use of example after example of events that are unlikely is a good choice. Similarly, turning unlikely events into the standard for God, creates a memorable contrast between human life and God.

Is the Synoptic Problem a Mathematics Problem?

John T. Saccoman

New Testament scholars have been interested in the so-called “Synoptic Problem” since the 1700’s. Simply put, it is the “problem” of why the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke are so similar [Stein], and yet, in other ways, different [Gast]. Which one came first? Did the writer of one see one or both of the others?

In broad terms, the synoptic Gospels follow the same basic outline; in all three, Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist, enters the desert for temptation, and then begins His public ministry, followed by His journey to Jerusalem and subsequent trial. They all end with His death and resurrection.

One way to analyze the problem is to determine how much material the individual Gospels share. In doing so, scholars must select which versions of the texts to use. This data has been compiled by numerous scholars; one of whom, Frederick Gast, wrote an article “Synoptic Problem” contained in the *Jerome Biblical Commentary* [Gast]. We use his data, with an assist from Msgr. Anthony Ziccardi [Ziccardi] to hypothesize the numbers when ranges of values are provided.

What Gast has done is to provide a number of verses for each of the Gospels, indicating how many are shared or not shared by them. The counts refer to the Greek versions of the Synoptic Gospels. Thus, we state that the Gospel of Mark has a total of 677 verses, Matthew 1070, and Luke 1150. Applying Gast’s data, we can make the following hypotheses:

The three Synoptic Gospels share 360 verses—
“threefold tradition”;

Mark shares 175 verses with Matthew that are not found in Luke, and 50 verses with Luke that are not found in Matthew, while Matthew and Luke share 210 verses that are not in the Gospel of Mark—“twofold traditions”;

Matthew, Mark and Luke, have about 325, 92 and 530 verses, respectively, not found in either of the other two—“unique traditions”.

Note that the original numbers in Gast do not quite add up, and these had to be adjusted slightly to maintain proper total numbers of verses for each of the gospels. [Ziccardi]

Mathematicians and logicians will occasionally use Venn diagrams to visually represent sets and their interrelationships. For example, let $A = \{1,2,3\}$ and $B = \{2,4,6\}$. Figure 1 represents the two sets, so on the right, set A alone contains 1 and 3, set B alone contains 4 and 6, and the common region between A and B will contain the number 2.

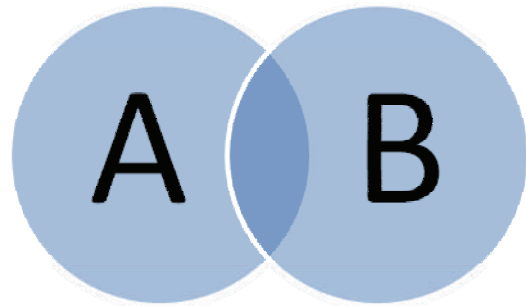


Figure 1: Venn diagram example.

In Figure 2 below, we present a slightly more complex Venn diagram that highlights the possible interrelationships between and among the material in the three Synoptic Gospels.

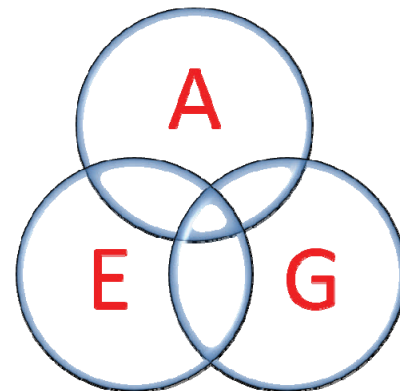


Figure 2: Region A is the material in Mark alone (92 verses); E is the material in Matthew alone (325 verses); G is the material in Luke alone (530 verses); B is the material shared by Mark and Matthew but not Luke (175 verses); C is the material shared by Mark and Luke but not Matthew (50 verses); F is the material shared by Matthew and Luke but not

Mark (210 verses); and D is the material shared by all three (360 verses).

An example of the triple tradition can be seen in Jesus' command to the paralytic that he cured. In Luke 5:24 (cf. Matthew 9:6, Mark 2:10) we have

"...In any case, to make it clear that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,"—he then addressed the paralyzed man: "I say to you, get up! Take your mat with you, and return to your house."

An early theory about the interrelationships came from St. Augustine. He hypothesized that Matthew came first, and that Mark used Matthew's gospel as a source (and abbreviated it), and that Luke used the other two. The diagram of this theory is depicted in Figure 3.

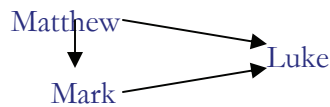


Figure 3: St. Augustine's hypothesis

Matthew has 1070 total verses, and 325 verses not found in the other two, so the material in Matthew shared with either or both of the other two is $1070 - 325 = 745$ verses, or 70%. In other words, 70% of Matthew's gospel is not unique. For Mark, $677 - 92 = 585$ verses are shared, or 86%, and Luke has $1150 - 530 = 620$, or 54% of its verses shared with Mark and/or Matthew.

These numbers alone cast St. Augustine's theory in serious doubt; if Luke saw both of the other gospels, then why does he have the lowest percentage of shared material? (And, if he saw Matthew's gospel, why is Luke's Nativity narrative so different from that of Matthew?) In fact, Matthew and Luke only follow the same order when they agree with Mark; whenever they depart from Mark, each follows his own way. [Anchor]

Two other theories have Luke as using both Mark and Matthew. In 1957, Farrer hypothesized that St. Augustine's theory should be modified a bit, switching Mark and Matthew [Figure 4]. This can be dismissed for the same reason as Augustine's, namely, that Luke's shared percentage is the lowest of the three.

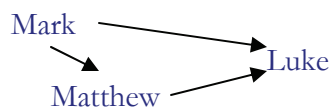


Figure 4: Farrer's hypothesis

In 1789, the so-called Griesbach Hypothesis

was put forward, and it was revived in 1964 by Farmer. This theory essentially took the Augustine diagram and switched Mark and Luke. [Figure 5] This would seem to be a valid theory, as Mark has the highest shared percentage (86%) of all three. However, to put forth his theory, Farmer requires an early second century date for the writing of Mark's gospel when there is much evidence to suggest a much earlier publication [Stein]. In addition, Mark's is the shortest of the gospels, which likely would not be the case if Mark knew of Matthew

and Luke. Finally, Matthew and Luke have 210 verses in

common that Mark does not contain. This is the highest

number of verses in any of the two-fold traditions, which scholars say actually points to the existence of a common source that Mark did not have.

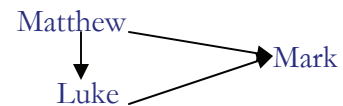


Figure 5: The Griesbach Hypothesis

Looking at the two-way shares, we can determine that about 535 of the verses in Mark ($360 + 175 = 535$, and $535 / 677 = 79\%$) are shared with Matthew, and slightly more than 60% of the verses in Mark ($410 / 677$) are shared with Luke. The only other significant percentage is the intersection of Matthew and Luke, which constitutes slightly less than 50% of Luke ($570 / 1150$).

Thus, when analyzing the twofold and threefold traditions, we observe that the intersection Mark and Matthew comprise a significantly higher percentage of Mark than does the intersection of Mark and Luke. This would cast doubt on any theory that supposes that Mark did not come first. Thus, the conclusion that has much favor today is confirmed by the numbers, namely, that Mark came first and was used independently by Matthew and Luke. This gives rise to the Two Source Hypothesis,

that Matthew and Luke worked independently using both Mark and a collection of Jesus' sayings known as "Q". It is believed that Q accounts for the much of the material (210 verses) shared by Matthew and Luke but not Mark. [Figure 4]

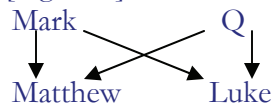


Figure 4: Two-Source hypothesis

So, although it may never truly be solved, the current hypothesis for the solution to the Synoptic Problem is confirmed by mathematical analysis.

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A Tentative Assignment Sequence on Luke for the Journey Class

Arundhati Sanyal

When I walked into the lounge to meet up with the other participants of the Catholic seminar, my first thought was how close this all seemed to my school years with the Apostolic Carmelites in the heartland of Indian coal mines and steel townships where I grew up. There too a Catholic church which had established itself as the premier educational system and had earned the genuine respect of predominantly Hindu middle-class families, welcomed students from outside the fold to participate in its unique vision of what it meant to be educated and well-versed in civic and personal values in accordance with the precepts of the Church. I was reminded of the pluralism practiced and encouraged within our school walls; there were the early morning prayers at the chapel where “Our Father in Heaven. . .” merged with familiar hymns like “There are numerous strings in your lute/Let me add my own among them. . .” that preceded rigorous liberal arts pursuits in Indian and world history, the sciences, and literature.

In the seminar I was attending, Father Anthony Ziccardi introduced the two meanings in which the word “Catholic” applied: the religious denomination that it represents and the word in its original meaning as “inclusive”. I realized that both of these meanings and contexts of the word had been operative in my early relationship with Catholic schools. I understand Luke as a participant in a pluralist society that is in flux and at a significant moment of Christian history where it is forging an identity separate from the preceding Judaic roots, yet enmeshed in it. The notion that Luke possibly attended Jewish synagogues regularly even as the Gospel was being formulated lends credence to the ground realities of most religious and cultural convergences such as the one I found myself in Indian post-colonial life of the 60s and 70s.

In what follows, I have tried to come up with some governing themes that could be the basis for writing assignments on the Gospel of Luke for the Journey of Transformation. The most obvious connection between course and text is the journey theme, so this is a good point to begin a writing ex-

ploration that emerges from students’ reading of the text. As a conscious narrator and writer/compiler, Luke collates theme and structure and places events, episodes, miracles, sermons, and characters in ways that extend the trope of “journey” to Christ’s leadership of his disciples through his own example. This in turn leads to an examination of the nature and purpose of discipleship and its role in the conception of the Church and its functions.

Journey as a metaphor of movement or catalyst drives and binds the narrative such that destination after destination is reached only to reveal further quests and more difficult challenges both for the Son of God as well as for his disciples. Dennis M. Sweetland in his article, *Following Jesus: Discipleship in Luke-Acts*, points out one way in which the journey motif extends its themes and intentions: “Luke’s use of ‘to follow’ in a figurative sense indicates that the journey motif was never meant to be understood merely in physical terms. . . . There is a connection, therefore, between the journey motif and the life of faith” (110). In following up on Father Ziccardi’s initial suggestion in the seminar that the approach to the text should be one that has confidence in objectivity, it is particularly useful to look at a convergence of narrative structure and thematic purpose as a way of appreciating the conscious design that underscores the context of this work.

The following assignment sequence assumes that the text will be taught for at least two class periods with preparatory reading assigned a week before class. The reading is accompanied with reflective journaling that students post in the blog which is made “private” so that the student blog can be read only by the instructor who can reply to the individual student. I find this to be useful in providing the hesitant writer enough space to feel confident enough to respond freely. There will be in-class group activity that precedes group submissions in a Discussion Board forum where the entire class can read and participate in the discussion. The assignment is geared towards both critical reading and writing that emerges from personal reflection accompanied by close textual reading and connections

made in class participation.

The Journey Motif in The Gospel According to Luke

Journal Questions: Between Chapters 5 to 18 of The Gospel mark out between 3 to 5 instances where Jesus is on a journey. Point out why these instances are noteworthy. Why did you happen to notice these few? Who is on a journey; Jesus, his disciples, or both? What connections do you see between Jesus' journey and that of his disciples? Explain some of these connections.

Reflect on journey as more than a physical phenomenon, almost a spiritual (metaphoric) movement from one place/state to another. Try to conceive of journey as something other than mere physical movement on a geographical plane. Think of a time you have traveled but have less recollection of the physical details rather more of an emotional connection between people you traveled with, or the association of an abiding experience you had while traveling that has become more important than the physical journey itself. Reflect on why this is and what changes you experienced within yourself as you undertook your travels.

Group Posting in Discussion Board:

According to Dennis M. Sweetland, "Individuals are presented as following Jesus only after they have heard his words and observed his powerful deeds".

As a group discuss the sequence of events where you see Jesus performing miracles followed by any one of his disciples performing acts of commitment to him. What are the implications of such sequencing? As a reader, how does this help you conceive of the relationship between God and his followers?

Also, what place does the miraculous have in the creation of faith? How does the omniscient narrator in Luke place episodes, miracles, parables, etc. so the miraculous can be acceptable and even become inevitable? For example, discuss the purpose of having two similitudes as a lead-up to the Parable of the Lost Son in Chapter 15.

The sequence above is a work in progress meant to use some of the ways in which Father Ziccardi approached the text of Luke in the seminar. It helps me engage students in an objective and critical way to the text without compromising the reflective nature of their study of these texts. I am grateful for the three-day workshop and hope to use some of the material for other such assignment sequences.

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Singing as Primordial Language in the Gospel According to Luke

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According to Rabbi Schneur Zalman, the late 18th century founder of the Chabad branch of Hasidic Judaism, “[t]he masters of song – the souls and the angels – go out in song and are drawn by song. Their ‘going out’ in yearning for God and their drawing back into their own existence in order to fulfill the purpose of their creation are by means of song and melody.” (Shabbat 51b) In the *Zohar*, a 13th century mystical commentary on the Talmud of various literary styles, it is written that “there is a temple in heaven that is only opened through song.”

An important ancient practice in practically every known society was the telling of stories with the help of music. It was believed that music helped to lower the barriers of the word, and its meaning came across enhanced. In Eastern and Western spiritual traditions, the voice is recognized as a bridge between the inner realm and the outer realms of being. It is often considered as an intermediary for the translation of spirit into matter and then for matter into spirit through human beings.

Such beliefs and traditions seem to indicate and acknowledge the existence of a primordial language fundamentally musical and essentially vocal in its earliest expression. There is anthropological evidence that chanting came before speech. Ligaments that attach muscles to bones leave traces on the skeletal frame that tells much about how those muscles were used. The vocal mechanism is complex: for chanting – which can be described as natural vocal utterance sustained by breath and limited in range – the lungs and vocal cords are enough; for speaking, the mouth and tongue are drawn into action.

Early human skeletal remains reveal signs that the use of the voice to produce speech goes back some eighty thousand years, while also suggesting that chanting began perhaps half a million years earlier. (Menuhin, 1979, p. 7) The supposition that chanting, or singing, is the primordial language of humankind is, accordingly, supported by the anthropological evidence. Natural human utterances such as cries, calls, sighs, and moans, inform the more formal melodic and rhythmic elements found uni-

versally in folk song and in religious ritual chants. The Levites, according to the *Zohar*, were chosen to sing in the temple because the name “Levi” means cleaving. The spiritual significance of this knowledge is that “the soul of him who heard their singing at once cleaved to God.” (*Zohar* 2:19a)

Chanting – or singing – is the primordial language not only in human life. “Where were you ... when the morning stars sang together?” (Job 38:7 NRSV) Job is humbled and silenced by this question posed to him from “the Lord out of the whirlwind.” Moreover, the apostle Paul attests that, “we know that the whole of creation has been groaning (primordial language) for release from bondage (Rom. 8:22), [and] that in our weakness and inability to pray as we ought, the Spirit intercedes with sighs (primordial language) too deep for words.” (Rom. 8:26)

Psalm 148 is a hymn that calls upon all created things to praise the Lord, including “sea monsters, fire, hail, stormy wind, mountains, wild animals, fruit trees and all cedars, as well as kings and all people.” In this hymn of praise, natural life, biological life, and human life – all of creation – is called to unite in one common voice of praise. Well-acquainted with creation’s primordial language, the early 13th century St. Francis of Assisi was able to preach to birds, “convert” the vicious wolf of Gubbio, and echo the invitation to praise through his famous *Canticle of all Creatures*.

The Gospel according to Luke contains four vivid instances where primordial language – or singing – is used in response to an encounter with the Divine presence. The first instance surrounds the divine encounter with the angel Gabriel by the priest Zechariah and the resultant events of that encounter. Rendered mute for the duration of the pregnancy of his wife Elizabeth, Zechariah recovered his ability to speak after the birth of his son, whom he named John, following God’s instruction. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Zechariah *sang* the words of prophecy (Luke 1:68-79) which, traditionally and liturgically, is called the *Benedictus*. When translated from the Latin, *Benedictus* means “blessed.”

As a song of thanksgiving that is divided into two parts, the first part offers thanks for the “Messianic hopes of the Jewish nation. The second part publicly proclaims that this child John would play an important role in the redemption of the world, proclaiming repentance for the forgiveness of sins and the salvation yet to come.” (Lockyer, 2005, p. 119)

The second instance of singing in *The Gospel according to Luke* is Mary’s song, liturgically known as the “*Magnificat*” (Luke 1:46 – 55) which is from the Latin meaning, “to magnify.” Mary’s song was in response to the laudatory greeting by Elizabeth, her kinswoman and the wife of the priest Zechariah. At the time of the greeting, Elizabeth also was six months pregnant with her first child, who would become known as “John, the Baptist.”

Luke reports that “when Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, ‘Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?’” (Luke 1:41-43)

In her response to Elizabeth’s greeting, Mary envisions and sings of a reversal, or a re-ordering within the state of human affairs. She praises the “Mighty One who lifts up the lowly, brings down the powerful, and who fills the hungry with good things, and sends the rich away empty.” Mary’s song also contains recognition of “her own humility.” In his book *All the Music of the Bible*, Herbert Lockyer, Jr. writes that “[Mary] was mindful of her status as a humble village maiden whose ‘low estate’ the Lord regarded.” He makes the observation that Jesus also would say of himself: “I am meek and humble of heart.” (Matt. 11:29) Such poverty of spirit, Lockyer notes, “is the first beatitude and the very threshold of the kingdom of heaven.” (Lockyer, 2005, p. 118)

The third instance of singing in The Gospel According to Luke is that of the angelic host that heralds the birth of Jesus. Also known as the “Song of Angels,” *Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis* is interpreted from the Latin in the New American Bible as “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom

his favor rests. (Luke 2:14)

While the Gospel according to Matthew focuses the importance of “making the birth of the Messiah known to kings, rulers, and to the rich and powerful, thus fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14, “Luke’s account of Jesus’ birth fulfills the words of Isaiah 61:1 – 3,

proclaiming the news of the Savior’s birth first to the poor and powerless.” (Lockyer 2005, p. 120) “The Song of Angels fills the air from a multitude of heavenly hosts only after the angel declares the sign will be nothing majestic, regal, or triumphant. The ‘sign’ will be a small baby lying in a feed trough.” (Lockyer, 2005, p. 121) Thus, into one singing community, the baby brings together angels, the prophets of old, and all who desire life in the emerging Kingdom of God.

The fourth instance of singing in the Gospel according to Luke is that by Simeon, “a righteous and devout man” to whom it was revealed by the Holy Spirit that he would “not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah.” (Luke 2:25-26) Simeon’s inspired utterance, *Nunc Dimittis*, which is from the Latin for “*now you are dismissing*,” links the voices of the ancient prophets of Israel and the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy in the child before him in the temple. Beholding the eight days old Jesus in the temple, Simeon fervently proclaimed:

“*Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of all of the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel.*” (Luke 2:29-32 *New American Bible*)

Through song, God’s message of love and redemption is communicated, and, with Simeon, those who recognize the immediacy of “salvation” respond in gratitude and submission.

Poets and scientists concur that song itself is a gift bestowed upon the singer. While the Lebanese poet Kahlil Gibran wrote that “...the song that you sing was not composed within your heart...” (Thoughts and Meditations), New York

City neuroscientist, Columbia University professor of Clinical Neurology and Psychiatry and author of *Musicophilia – Tales of Music and the Brain*, Dr. Oliver Sacks speaks about “Divine intervention via the nervous system that synchronizes everything in the nervous system...[and] that science is finding that song lies at the core of our being.” ([The Music Instinct](#) – Science & Song, PBS documentary)

Australian aboriginal creation myths tell of the legendary totemic being who wandered over the continent during the *Dreamtime*, singing out the name of everything that crossed its path – birds, animals, plants, rocks, waterholes – and so singing the world into existence unified by song. (Chatwin, 1987)

Conversely, the Biblical story of the tower of Babel (Gen. 11) reports the destruction of a unified human language because of human pride. As a result, humankind became scattered and divided geographically and linguistically.

How should the psalmist’s exhortation to “sing to the Lord a new song” (Ps. 98) be understood? The invitation “to sing a new song” is extended to not just to the human community, but to “all the earth: let the sea roar and all that fills it; let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy at the presence of the Lord.” The “new song” calls all creation together into one voice of praise.

Perhaps the “new song” can be understood as the common primordial language of praise in which all life participates, which recognizes and affirms relationship and interdependence throughout all creation, and which opens the temple in heaven, providing a pathway for the coming of God’s Kingdom on Earth.

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The Other “Our Father”: Luke 11:2-4

John P. Wargacki

“This is how you are to pray:

*Our Father in Heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread;
and forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors;
and do not subject us to the final
test,
but deliver us from the evil one.”*
Matthew 6:9-13
(New American Bible)

The epigraph for this reflection is one version of the “Lord’s Prayer” typically recognized as the one recited regularly by Christian denominations worldwide since the first century. Yet Luke’s compressed version of the same prayer is a striking example of how the textual report of a common experience might vary depending upon authorial intent and the audience for which the text is written. Luke writes:

Father, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread
and forgive us our sins
for we ourselves forgive everyone
in debt to us,
and do not subject us to the final
test.

Luke 11: 2-3

(New American Bible)

While obviously more concise, the language of Luke, as with his version of Christ’s eight Beatitudes, reveal more than a different version of the text, but also careful attention to the concerns of a different audience. As the two synoptic Gospels based on the foundational material supplied by Mark, Matthew and Luke not only offers episodes absent from Mark, but the subsequent Gospels shape their material around target audiences. It is generally regarded

that Matthew wrote for a Jewish audience, presenting Jesus as “the Messiah” whom the Jews had anticipated. Matthew’s Jesus appears Moses-like at points, preaching his most famous sermon from “the mount,” just as Moses brought forth the Decalogue from Yahweh on Mount Sinai. Consequently, Matthew’s Jesus routinely quotes the Hebrew Bible and, as is often found in the Gospel of John, performs deeds and miracles in order to fulfill prophecy from the Hebrew scriptures.

Luke, meanwhile, writes on behalf of the marginalized members of the early Christian community: the impoverished, the ill, and women. In no other Gospel is Jesus more intimately involved with those members. One simple example illustrates this textual contrast: Matthew’s audience, while certainly oppressed by Roman occupation, may nevertheless have sufficient means, perhaps resulting in version of his first Beatitude: “Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Matt 5:3). Luke, alternately, writes: “Blessed are the poor” (Lk 6:20). Additionally, the same sermon delivered by Jesus in Luke takes place not on a mount but on a plain.

Applying this concept to Luke’s obscure version of the Lord’s Prayer, Fr. Eugene LaVerdiere, SSS, claims that the major point of contrast between Matthew’s and Luke’s prayer is that of discipleship. Where Matthew is concerned with conversion, Luke is concerned with the material needs of the early Christian converts.

Luke presented the Lord’s Prayer as the prayer of men and women who are disciples, followers and forerunners of Jesus. To pray the Lord’s

Prayer according to the scriptures, and more particularly according to Luke, we must see ourselves as disciples who are taught by Jesus, as followers who pursue the way he first traced, and as forerunners whose basic mission is to prepare his final coming.

(53)

Indeed, it is at this juncture where literary textual analysis of competing texts, each concerned with variations of a common experience, can be valuable in assessing even slight disparities of language. Matthew's audience, to a large degree, requires the expansive language as a community pondering the separation between the old and new covenant. Luke's audience, disenfranchised and marginalized, requires little convincing as this author's Jesus proclaims the coming of His Father's Kingdom in concise and immediate terms. Hence each author, mindful of their discrete audiences, shapes the details and language of his Gospel accordingly. As with multiple versions of poems and prose passages, the central question is never concerned with which version is ultimately correct, but rather what do the subsequent "drafts" tell us that the earlier version or versions do not, and how do they co-exist. LaVerdiere attempts to answer that question about the versions of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew and Luke:

In Matthew, the heavenly father is expected to give 'good things' to anyone who asks him (7:11). In Luke, the heavenly Father gives 'the Holy Spirit' (11:13). The Lord's Prayer – its address to the Father and all of its petitions – is consequently summarized in the gift of the Holy Spirit, the creative source of life and energizing power of the Christian mission.

(26)

From this point of view, Luke's instance of verbal compression makes perfect sense. The immediacy of his Lord's Prayer speaks loudly and clearly to an audience whose earthly existence is often measured on daily basis, an audience eager for the Spirit of Truth from whom all good things may come even if their higher ambitions point to a heavenly kingdom awaiting them in the life to come.

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