

8. THE CIRCUMCISION AND MANIFESTATION OF JESUS (2:21-40)

2 ²¹When eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child, and he was called Jesus. This was the name given to him by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

²²When the days of their purification according to the Mosaic Law had passed, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord—²³as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “*Every male that opens the womb is to be considered sacred^a to the Lord*”—²⁴and to offer a sacrifice as is prescribed in the Law of the Lord: “*a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.*”^b

²⁵Now there was at that time in Jerusalem a man named Simeon who was upright and devout, living in expectation of the consolation of Israel, and the holy Spirit was with him. ²⁶He had been informed by the holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. ²⁷He now came, guided by the Spirit, into the Temple area. As the parents brought in their child Jesus, to perform for him what was customary under the Law, ²⁸Simeon took him in his arms and blessed God, saying,

²⁹Now you may dismiss your servant, Lord, in peace, according to your promise,

³⁰for my eyes *have seen your salvation*, Isa 40:5

³¹made ready by you in the sight of all peoples,

³²*a light to give revelation to the Gentiles* and Isa 49:6

glory to your people Israel.

³³The child’s father and mother were surprised at what was being said about him. ³⁴Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “Look, this child is marked for the fall and the rise of many in Israel, to be a symbol that will be rejected—³⁵indeed, a sword shall pierce you too—so that the thoughts of many minds will be laid bare.”

³⁶There was also a prophetess there, Anna, daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well along in years, having lived with her

^a Exod 13:2 ^b Lev 12:8

husband after her marriage for seven years,³⁷ and had been a widow for eighty-four years. She never left the Temple area, but worshiped day and night with fasting and prayer.³⁸ At that very time she too came up and publicly praised God; she spoke about the child to all who were waiting for the deliverance of Jerusalem.

³⁹ When they had finished all that was required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee and their own town of Nazareth.⁴⁰ And as the child grew up, he became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and God's favor was upon him.

COMMENT

The infancy narrative continues in the spirit of traditional Jewish piety. This episode tells of the circumcision, naming, and manifestation of Jesus and is the parallel to the circumcision, naming, and manifestation of John (1:59-80). There are two main parts to the episode and a conclusion. The first consists of a double prelude to the manifestation. The first prelude is found in v. 21, which mentions the circumcision and naming of the child. The second prelude is found in vv. 22-24, which describe the purification of Mary and the presentation of Jesus. Both of these lead into the second main part, the double manifestation of Jesus to Simeon (vv. 25-35) and to Anna (vv. 36-38). The concluding vv. 39-40 pick up refrains of the infancy narrative.

Some commentators would separate v. 21 from this whole episode and attach it to the story of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem (so H. Schürmann, *Lukasevangelium*, 97-98; R. E. Brown, *Birth*, 394, 407), making vv. 22-40 simply the presentation of Jesus. This separation, however, tones down the parallelism of the John/Jesus stories in the infancy narrative.

Verse 21 is redactional, most clearly in its reference to the scene of the announcement of Jesus' birth by the angel to Mary (1:31), and in its parallelism to 1:59-63. Above we raised the question of separating 1:57-58 from 1:59-80 (p. 372). If one were to keep them closely related, then there would be all the more reason to link 2:21 to 2:22-40. As in 1:59 the circumcision and naming of John occasion the manifestation of the child and the prophetic utterance of Zechariah, his father, so too here. The naming of Jesus is given more stress in v. 21 than the circumcision, and his naming does not cause all the discussion that John's did. The step-parallelism is in evidence here when it is said that he is given a heaven-imposed name, which is not said in John's case, even though that was the origin of his name too. The step-parallelism is further in evidence in that there is the double rather than the single prelude for the eventual manifestation of Jesus. This will take place in the context of his presen-

tation in the Jerusalem Temple—an event separate from the circumcision and naming.

The manifestation itself is made on two levels: (a) to Simeon, from whom a double pronouncement is evoked, a canticle and an oracle; and (b) to Anna, the “prophetess,” who goes about spreading word of this child. The whole scene does not presuppose the birth episode that precedes (2:1-20) so much as it does the story of the circumcision, naming, and manifestation of John. If the circumcision and naming of John caused a reaction among people, how much more do the circumcision and naming of Jesus? That is the thrust of the parallel. Moreover, it should be noted that Brown does not list v. 21 under his “reactions” to the birth of Jesus, which he has restricted to vv. 15-20, despite the attachment of v. 21 to the preceding (*Birth*, 410). For these reasons I prefer to regard vv. 21-40 as a unit in the infancy narrative, along with J. M. Creed, *The Gospel*, 37; A. Plummer, *Gospel*, 61; J. Ernst, *Evangelium nach Lukas*, 112; G. Schneider, *Evangelium nach Lukas*, 69.

Some scholars have thought that vv. 21-40 may have existed in a different form at one time. The references to Jesus’ “parents” (v. 27b) and his “father and mother” (v. 33), along with the notice about their “surprise” at what was being said, coming as it does on the heels of an announcement to Mary in chap. 1 and of the shepherds’ revelation to them (2:17), make some commentators think that possibly the story existed in an earlier form. There is no solid reason to think that the presentation story was really part of the Baptist-source at one time and that it has been shifted to Jesus by Luke. The details in it resemble features of the story of Samuel from 1 Samuel 1-2 and lead one to realize that Luke is writing his story in imitation of the Samuel story. The canticle of Simeon, however, is another matter. That may well have been added by Luke at the secondary stage of his composition of the infancy narrative, as Brown (*Birth*, 454) has argued. It is, however, unclear whether this canticle is derived from the same early Jewish-Christian circle as the Magnificat and Benedictus. Brown argues plausibly that the transition from v. 27 to v. 34 is smooth. On the other hand, Schneider (*Evangelium nach Lukas*, 70) toys with the idea that 2:6-7 was originally followed by 2:22-38. This, however, is unlikely, since v. 21 would almost have to be included, and again the canticle in vv. 28-33 would have to be omitted. In any case, one does detect signs that the story could have been composed in a more coherent fashion.

In v. 21 the circumcision and naming of Jesus are recounted. Jesus is marked, as was John, with the sign of the covenant (Gen 17:11) and incorporated into Israel (cf. Josh 5:2-9). He is given a heaven-imposed name, Jesus; the stress falls on the naming rather than on the circumcision.

In vv. 22-24 two events are recounted that occasion the eventual mani-

festation of Jesus: (a) the purification of Mary, forty days after Jesus' birth (v. 22a,24); and (b) the redeeming of Jesus, the firstborn, a month after his birth (vv. 22b,23). The redeeming is treated by (the Syrian) Luke as the presentation of Jesus in the Temple, with no mention being made of the payment of the five shekels. For, as the NOTES on 1:22b make clear, there is no evidence of a regulation requiring the presentation of the firstborn in either the OT or the Mishnah. This scene has become a presentation in imitation of the presentation of Samuel in 1 Sam 1:22-24. It may also be partly motivated by Luke's desire to explain something about birth practices in Palestinian Judaism to his predominantly Gentile readership. It should further be noted that Luke depicts Mary offering a pair of turtledoves and two young pigeons; one of the pair of birds was, according to Lev 16:6, a sin-offering. Despite some later mariological speculation, Luke thinks that Mary had to be purified after the birth of Jesus.

What is operative in vv. 22-24 is a stress on the fidelity of Mary and Joseph, as devout and pious Jews, to all the requirements of the Mosaic Law. They carry out on behalf of Jesus all the things that Luke thought were required by that Law for the birth of a child. In these verses the Law is mentioned three times (vv. 22a,23a,24a), and it will be referred to later in the manifestation to Simeon (v. 27) and in the conclusion of the episode (v. 39). The NOTES on these verses call attention to certain problems in them (to whom does "their" in v. 22 refer? what was the presentation? do the datings since birth that are involved [forty days, one month] fit together?). These problems make it highly unlikely that Luke has been dependent here on accurate information, let alone on Mary's recollections. His aim is to stress fidelity to the Mosaic Law. The new form of God's salvation comes with obedience to this Law.

In vv. 25-35 we meet the first manifestation of Jesus, to Simeon, a devout, upright, and aged Jew, apparently of a non-priestly family, who reminds one not only of the aged priest Eli in the Samuel story of 1 Samuel 1-2, but also of Zechariah in the John the Baptist story. Just as the greatness of John was predicted by Zechariah in the Benedictus, so now the greatness of Jesus will be hymned by Simeon. Because of the step-parallelism, however, Simeon utters a double pronouncement, a canticle in vv. 29-32 and an oracle in vv. 34-35.

Simeon is described not only as upright and devout, but as one living in expectation of the consolation of Israel. Though the expression as such, "the consolation of Israel," does not occur in the OT, it is an allusion to the Book of Consolation in Deutero-Isaiah (see NOTE on 2:25). Both the consolation of Israel and the redemption/deliverance of Jerusalem (v. 38) are the message of the herald of good news in Isa 52:9. Recall too the heralds of Deutero-Isaiah, masculine in 41:27 and 52:7 (for Simeon) and feminine in 40:9 (for Anna).

Moreover, Simeon is described as particularly endowed with God's holy Spirit, which has made known to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by that same Spirit to come to the Temple area at the right time, he takes the child from Mary and pronounces his canticle. He is made to recognize the new form of salvation that has come in the birth of this child.

The canticle of Simeon, the *Nunc Dimittis*, is composed of three distichs (vv. 29,30-31,32). In uttering his canticle, Simeon casts himself in the role of a servant-watchman, posted to wait for the arrival of someone. He praises God as "Lord," using of him the title *despotēs* (voc. *despota*), which is sometimes the translation of *Yhwh* in the LXX and is often used by Jewish writers composing in Greek to refer to Yahweh. He sings of his release from duty, using the expression found in the OT, "to release someone in peace." But more importantly, he recognizes in Jesus the promised bearer of messianic peace, salvation, and light. These are to be revealed through him to the Gentiles and unto the glory of Israel, but they are said to have been made ready for "all peoples," Israel and the Gentiles alike. Here Luke associates with the presentation of Mary's firstborn the effects of the Christ-event; contrast the linking of peace with the death of Jesus in Eph 2:14-16. This tie is part of Luke's tendency to manifest the growing early Christian awareness that these effects were to be retrojected to the beginning of Jesus' earthly existence. We do not have, however, an "Incarnation-soteriology," *pace* Schneider (*Evangelium nach Lukas*, 72), since Luke nowhere manifests the Johannine idea of Jesus' incarnation.

The *Nunc Dimittis* makes an advance over the Song of Angels at the birth of Jesus (2:14) in that the birth is now related not only to the welfare of Israel (2:32b), but salvation is now announced in the sight of all peoples, the Gentiles as well as Israel (2:32a).

The second pronouncement that Simeon makes is the oracle addressed to Mary (vv. 34bc-35ab). Mary is singled out here in imitation of Hannah in 1 Samuel, who plays a more important role in the presentation of Samuel. In its tone the oracle is ominous and looks to the future. It describes the child as a source of division in Israel, and foreshadows the saying of Jesus himself in 12:51-53, about his setting father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, etc.: "This child is marked for the fall and the rise of many in Israel." The ominous note is found in that "the fall" precedes "the rise." This is, in fact, Luke's way of expressing the scandal of the cross, the stumbling block. Luke has been castigated for not having expressed the Pauline theology of the cross (see 1 Cor 1:18,23). The critical character of the child's mission is just as sharply expressed here and the force of the language should not be overlooked. The rejection of Jesus by his own

people is already announced in the infancy narrative; and the chord now struck will be orchestrated in many ways in the Gospel proper (see e.g. 4:29; 13:33-35; 19:44,47-48; 20:14,17). He is the symbol to be rejected, like Isaiah and his children of old (8:18).

Mary too will be caught in this critical aspect of his mission. For the discriminating sword (see NOTE on 2:35a) will pierce her soul too. She will learn what division can come into a family by the role that her son is to play, for her relation to him will be not merely maternal but one transcending such familial ties, viz. that of the faithful disciple. Simeon's words to Mary about the sword foreshadow, in effect, Jesus' answer to the woman who uttered a beatitude over Mary for having given birth to such a son; he replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and observe it" (11:28; cf. 8:21).

Verse 35b is to be understood as the continuation of v. 34bc, with the saying about the discriminatory sword in v. 35a being directed solely to Mary (in the second sing.). The "thoughts" that will be laid bare are those hostile or antagonistic thoughts that will cause human beings to resist the ministry of Jesus itself.

As elsewhere in the Gospel, Luke here pairs off his *dramatis personae* in terms of man and woman (compare Zechariah and Mary in the announcement scenes, Simon the Pharisee and the sinful woman in chap. 7, the widow of Zarephath and Naaman in chap. 4); so too here. The pronouncement about the future greatness of John came from Zechariah, his father, in his canticle, the Benedictus. Now the pronouncement of the greatness of Jesus comes not only from the aged, venerable Simeon, but also from an aged widow, the prophetess Anna. The step-parallelism is at work, and it involves a man and a woman. However, Anna is not made to utter any pronouncement; her herald's role is rather to spread the word about this child acknowledged by Simeon.

She is to do this to those who await the deliverance or redemption of Jerusalem. Recall the description of Simeon above, and the references to the heralds of Second Isaiah.

The concluding verses (39-40) echo refrains already found in the infancy narrative (see details in the NOTES).

NOTES

2 21. *When eight days had passed.* Lit. "and when (the) eight days of circumcising him were (ful)filled." For the eighth day, see NOTE on 1:59. Luke has referred to filling up days/time in 1:23,57; 2:6,22; the phrase simply means that the time set for a certain activity had come.

The best mss. here read the masc. pronoun, *auton*, "him," but ms. D has

rather to *paidion*, "the child," which is perhaps demanded by the sense of the context, but is for that reason suspect as a copyist's improvement. My translation, "the child," is not a preference for ms. D, but a concession to clarity in English.

Through the circumcision Jesus, the Messiah, is made subject to the Law; but Luke does not exploit this aspect of it. Cf. Gal 4:4.

he was called Jesus. Lit. "his name was called Jesus"; see NOTES on 1:31,59. This verse provides a link with the second episode in the infancy narrative, the announcement of the birth of Jesus to Mary. Stress is put here more on the naming of Jesus than on his circumcision; contrast the elaborate story of the naming of John in 1:59-80, where no emphasis was given to the heaven-imposed name. We are not told which parent named Jesus.

22. *When the days of their purification . . . had passed.* Lit. "and when the days of their purification were (ful)filled." See NOTE on 2:21; the time had come for the rite of purification.

The reading *autōn*, "their," is attested in the best Greek mss. (S, B, etc.). To whom would it refer? Mary and Joseph? Mary and Jesus? Since there was no requirement for a purification of the husband, copyists have altered the text: *autou*, "his" (i.e. Jesus' purification) is found in ms. D and some ancient versions; the OS and Vg read a form that could be understood as either "his" or "her" (*eius*). Understood as "his," the correction, like the *autou* reading, makes no sense, since there was no requirement that the newborn child be purified. Understood as "her," it is an obvious correction based on Lev 12:4 (see next NOTE), which cannot be preferred to the *lectio difficilior*, "their." See further W. H. P. Hatch, *HTR* 14 (1921) 377-381.

The pron., "their," must be understood to refer to Joseph and Mary because of the main verb *anēgagon*, "they (i.e. his parents) brought him up." But since the time of Origen, commentators have tried to make "their" refer to Mary and Jesus (so, e.g. Creed, *The Gospel*, 39), despite the difficulty mentioned above. What has to be recognized is that Luke, not being a Palestinian Jewish Christian, is not accurately informed about this custom of the purification of a woman after childbirth. It is also an indication that his information is not derived from Mary's recollections or memoirs—which might be presumed to have got the matter correct.

according to the Mosaic Law. This is the first of several references to the Mosaic Law that run through the episode; see vv. 23,24,27,39. According to Lev 12:2-8 a woman who bore a male child was considered unclean for forty days; after seven days the child had to be circumcised (on the eighth), and the mother had to wait at home for thirty-three days, "until the days of her purifying were completed" (*heōs an plērōthōsin hai hēmerai katharseōs autēs*, 12:4), before she could touch anything sacred or enter the Temple courts. The time was doubled for a female child, fourteen + sixty-six days. After the fortieth (or eightieth) day she was to bring to a priest serving that week in the tent/Temple a one-year old lamb for a whole burnt offering (or holocaust) and a young pigeon or turtledove for a sin-offering to make expiation. If she could not afford the lamb, then she was to offer two turtledoves or two young pigeons.

they brought him up. I.e. Mary and Joseph, or his "parents," as they are

called in v. 27, bringing him from Bethlehem presumably, unless we are to think that Joseph and Mary had returned to Nazareth in the meantime. Nazareth is first mentioned again only at the end of this episode. The verb *anagein*, "bring up," is used again in Luke 4:5; Acts 7:41; 9:39; 12:4; 16:34—and frequently in Acts in the sense of "embarking" (e.g. 13:13; 16:11). Compare the presentation of Samuel in the sanctuary of Shiloh in 1 Sam 1:22-24.

to Jerusalem. Luke uses here *eis Hierosolyma*, the Greek spelling of the name of Jerusalem, which occurs again in 13:22; 19:28; 23:7, and twenty-five times in Acts. Beginning with 2:25 he will use the more frequent form *Ierousalēm*, which is almost a transcription of Hebrew *Yērūsālēm*, twenty-six times in the Gospel and thirty-nine times in Acts. See J. Jeremias, *ZNW* 65 (1974) 273-276. These forms alternate in some mss. Josephus (*Ant.* 7.3,2 § 67) records that David, having driven out the Jebusites, first "named the city after himself" (see 2 Sam 5:9; 1 Kgs 3:1—see NOTE on 2:4 above); and that in the time of Abraham it had been called *Solyma*, but was later named *Hierosolyma* because of the Temple (*hieron*). Though Josephus makes use of a popular etymology, explaining *Solyma* as meaning "security" in Hebrew, he alludes to Gen 14:18, where Melchizedek, "king of Salem," comes out to meet Abram on his return from the defeat of the kings. In 1QapGen 22:13 Salem is explicitly identified as Jerusalem (cf. Ps 76:3). See further Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.22 §§ 173-174; *J.W.* 6.10,1 § 438. In *Ant.* 7.4,12 § 312 Josephus locates Jerusalem as twenty stadia distant from Bethlehem; that would be only two and a half miles, whereas the ancient sites are actually about five and a half miles distant.

to present him to the Lord. This detail imitates the presentation of Samuel by his mother, Hannah, in 1 Sam 1:22-24. Yet Luke in the next verse relates Jesus' presentation to the law about the firstborn. Jesus was so designated in 2:7, and the obligation of redeeming him lay upon the parents. In Exod 13:1-2 we read: "Yahweh said to Moses, 'Consecrate to me every firstborn—whatever is the first to open every womb among the people of Israel, both human and animal, is mine.'" The implication of the consecration was a blessing on further offspring and well-being. See further Exod 13:11-16; 22:29b-30; Lev 27:26-27; Num 3:13; 8:17-18. The firstborn son was to be redeemed by a payment of five sanctuary shekels to a member of a priestly family (Num 3:47-48; 18:15-16), when the child was a month old. Luke makes no mention of the payment of the shekels to redeem the child. Instead he turns the act into a presentation of the child in the Jerusalem Temple, a custom about which nothing is said either in the OT or in the Mishnah. Such a custom for a firstborn son is simply unknown in Jewish tradition. Moreover, there is nothing either about the need of a purification of the firstborn son.

23. *as it is written.* Luke here uses the introductory formula *kathōs gegrap-tai*, as in Acts 7:42; 15:15. This formula is found in the LXX of 2 Kgs 14:6, used also of Scripture. It is the Greek equivalent of a formula introducing OT quotations in Qumran literature, *k'šr k'wb* (e.g. 1QS 8:14; 5:17; see J. A. Fitzmyer, *ESBNT*, 8-9). The quotation is introduced by *hoi* recitativum; see NOTE on 1:25.

the Law of the Lord. This is Luke's way (see vv. 24,39) of referring to the Mosaic Law (see v. 22).

Every male that opens the womb. Luke paraphrases here Exod 13:2. The Hebrew text speaks of *kol bēkôr, peṭer kol reḥem*, "every firstborn, the opener of every womb." This becomes in the LXX *pan prōtotokon, prōtogenes dianoigon pasan mēiran*, "every firstborn, the first-being opening every womb." *Bēkôr* was commonly used to designate the eldest son (see Gen 10:15; 22:21; Exod 6:14), and Luke knows of the understanding of Exod 13:2 in terms of the firstborn son; hence his addition of *arsen*, "male." In reality, the whole phrase is simply Luke's way of referring to Jesus as the "firstborn" (see 2:7). His retention of the graphic imagery of Exod 13:2 shows that he knows nothing of either Mary's virginity *in partu*, an idea that surfaced only later (see *Prot. Jas.* 19.1-20.2), or of a miraculous birth (without the rupture of the hymen).

considered sacred. Lit. "will be called holy," i.e. dedicated to Yahweh (see NOTE on 1:35). Luke plays on the title he gave to Jesus in the announcement to Mary.

24. *to offer a sacrifice.* The sacrifice is not for the redemption of the firstborn, but for the purification of the mother (see NOTE on 2:22).

a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. Luke derives most of the wording of this prescription from the LXX of Lev 12:8, which speaks of "two turtledoves or two young pigeons." The turtledove, of which three varieties are known in Palestine, is a small type of pigeon. The two species of birds are often linked in OT stipulations about animal sacrifices. Here the implication is that Mary offered these animals because she (or Joseph) could not afford the one-year old lamb for the whole burnt offering.

25. *Now.* Lit. "and behold," see NOTE on *kai idou* (1:20).

Jerusalem. See NOTE on 2:22.

Simeon. This name was commonly used among Jews of first-century Palestine, and the man meant here is otherwise unknown. He is hardly Simeon, son of Hillel and father of Rabban Gamaliel the Elder, *pace* A. Cutler, *JBR* 34 (1966) 29-35. In later legends Simeon becomes a priest (which is nowhere indicated in the Lucan story), indeed a high priest and successor to Zechariah (*Prot. Jas.* 24.3-4), and even a Christian, the Simeon of James' speech at the "Council" of Jerusalem (Acts 15:14; according to "some" known to John Chrysostom *In Actus Apostolorum hom.* 33.1; PG 60. 239). His name is a diminutive of *šēma'-'ēl*, "God has heard," or of *šēma'-yāh*, "Yahweh has heard," shortened to *šimē'ôn*, for which the more common Greek equivalent was *Simōn*, "Simon." In the OT "Simeon" was the name of one of the sons of Jacob (Gen 49:5) and of one of the tribes of Israel (Num 1:23). See further *ESBNT*, 105-112.

upright and devout. The description of Simeon places him, along with Zechariah and Elizabeth, Joseph and Mary, and Anna, among the representatives of faithful Jews of Palestine in the period immediately preceding the birth of Jesus. See NOTE on 1:6 for "upright." "Devout" (*eulabēs*) is used by Luke again in Acts 2:5; 8:2; 22:12 and is expressive of reverence and awe in God's presence (*BAG*, 322).

in expectation of the consolation of Israel. This description of Simeon will be paralleled in the infancy narrative by the description of those to whom Anna will speak about the child just born, those "waiting for the deliverance of Jerusalem" (2:38) and in the Gospel proper by the description of Joseph of Arimathea (23:50-51). Luke does not further explain the "consolation of Israel," but it is to be understood as the postexilic hope for God's eschatological restoration of the theocracy to Israel. The term plays on the impvs. of Isa 40:1; cf. Isa 61:2. See O. Schmitz, *TDNT* 5 (1967) 798; Str-B, 2, 124-126. In later rabbinic tradition the Messiah was sometimes given the title of *Měnaḥēm*, "Consoler" (Str-B, 1, 66). See further the NOTE on 2:38.

the holy Spirit was with him. Because God's prophetic Spirit was present to him, he will make the coming utterance about the child. The anarthrous use of *pneuma hagion* occurs here again, as in 1:15,35,41,67. Cf. the LXX of Dan 5:12; 6:4; or Theodotus of Dan 4:8,18. That it is to be understood of God's holy Spirit is clear from v. 26. For the verb *einai* with *epi* + acc., compare 3:2 (see NOTE there).

26. *had been informed.* Lit. "it had been disclosed to him" (cf. Acts 10:22).

not see death. I.e. experience it. "Seeing death" is an OT expression (Ps 89:49). From this expression Simeon's old age is usually deduced.

until. Luke uses here the classical Greek construction of *prin an* + subjunc., the only occurrence of it in the NT (see BDF § 383.3; § 395).

the Lord's Messiah. The OT expression, "the Anointed of Yahweh" (see e.g. 1 Sam 24:7,11; 26:9,11,16,23), is used here in the strictly messianic sense, of a future, expected Davidid.

27. *guided by the Spirit.* Lit. "in the Spirit he came." This is the Lucan motivation for his coming to the Temple at the right moment.

Temple area. Luke uses here *eis to hieron*, lit. "into the holy (place)," to designate the Temple in general or its outer courts (court of the women, court of the Gentiles). Contrast his use of *naos* for the "holy place" or "sanctuary," into which only priests entered, in 1:9,21,22. The reason for the specification is that Simeon can meet Mary only in one of the courts just mentioned.

the parents. As in vv. 41,43, Luke speaks of *tous goneis*, "the parents." Later he will speak of Jesus' "father and mother" (v. 33) or of "your father and I" (v. 48). These expressions reveal the independent character of the Simeon episode in chap. 2, and some commentators have argued on the basis of this usage that the account may have existed previously in an independent form, i.e. independent of chap. 1 and its mention of the virginal conception.

their child. See NOTE on *paidion* (1:59).

what was customary under the Law. This expression occurs only here in the NT and is not found in the LXX.

28. *Simeon took him.* Lit. "and he received him." The phrase begins with the unstressed *kai autos* (see p. 120 above).

blessed God. I.e. praised God, as Zechariah did in 1:64. Cf. 24:53. Actually Luke depicts Simeon uttering two blessings over Jesus, one in the Nunc dimittis of vv. 29-32, the other in his oracle-like statement in vv. 34b-35.

29. *Now.* This adv. is placed first in the sentence in both Greek and English for emphasis.

you may dismiss. Lit. "you are dismissing (or releasing)," the verb being in the pres. indic. Simeon speaks of himself as a servant (or slave) who has been performing the lengthy task of a watchman. The release from the task will come in death; the verb *apolyein* is used in the OT with that connotation (of Abram in Gen 15:2; of Aaron in Num 20:29; of Tobit in Tob 3:6; and of Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 2 Macc 9:9).

your servant. Simeon describes himself with the masc. form of what Mary applied to herself in 1:38, *doulos*. This word stands in contrast to *despotēs*, "lord, master," used in the voc. of God in the same verse. The latter Greek word was commonly used for gods in classical and Hellenistic Greek literature, and Josephus commonly used it as the Greek translation of *Yhwh* (see J. B. Fischer, "The Term *despotēs* in Josephus," *JQR* 49 [1958-1959] 132-138; cf. J. A. Fitzmyer, *WA*, 121-122). It also occurs occasionally in the LXX for *Yhwh* (e.g. Prov 29:25; cf. Isa 1:24; Jonah 4:3). Luke will use it again in Acts 4:24.

in peace. See the LXX of Gen 15:15.

30. *seen your salvation.* This is an allusion to the LXX of Isa 40:5, "all flesh shall see God's salvation," which Luke will use again in 3:6; cf. Acts 28:28. What Simeon was said above to be expecting is now cast in terms of the distinctively Lucan view of the Christ-event, viz. "salvation." See p. 222 above.

31. *made ready.* See NOTE on 1:17.

in the sight of all peoples. This phrase is inspired by an Isaian expression; see Isa 52:10, "before all the nations" (*enōpion pantōn tōn ethnōn*). Luke uses here *laōn*, "peoples"; in Acts 4:25-27 *ethnē* refers to the tribes of Israel, which are contrasted with *laoi*, "the nations." See G. D. Kilpatrick, *JTS* 16 (1965) 127. *Laōn* here, however, seems to express the two groups that will be mentioned in v. 32.

32. *a light to give revelation to the Gentiles.* This is an allusion to the Servant Song in Isa 49:6, "that you may be a light to the nations, salvation to the end of the earth." Cf. Isa 49:9.

Creed (*The Gospel*, 41) raises the question about the syntax of *phōs*, "light," here. It is coordinated with *doxan*, "glory," in the second part, with both of them in apposition to "your salvation" (v. 30); or is *doxan*, which is in the acc. case, governed by the prep. *eis* that precedes *apokalypsin*, "revelation"? If the former, then the salvation would be both a "light" to the Gentiles and "glory" to Israel. Creed prefers this as being "perhaps in closer agreement with the thought of the Gospel." The two words are also found in coordination in Isa 60:1. Probably the latter is meant, "a light (to give) revelation . . . and (to give) glory . . .," hinting at the priority accorded to Israel over the Gentiles in God's salvation—a notion that Luke shares with Paul (see Acts 13:46; cf. Rom 1:16; 2:10; 3:1). See further Brown, *Birth*, 440.

and glory to your people Israel. This should preferably be understood as coordinate to "revelation," as explained in the preceding NOTE. We have here an allusion to the LXX of Isa 46:13, "I shall set salvation in Zion, for glory unto Israel."

33. *The child's father and mother.* Lit. "and his father and mother was (sg.!) wondering (pl.)." The text-tradition is somewhat disturbed in this verse.

The sg. verb *ēn*, "was," is read by all mss.; the best Greek mss. (⌘, B, D, L, and many minuscules) have as subject following it, *ho patēr autou*, "his father" (which would agree with the sg. verb), but also "and mother," which should demand a pl. verb. However, some mss. (A, Θ and the Koine text-tradition) read *Iōsēph* instead of *ho patēr autou*. "Joseph," however, is clearly a copyist's correction, which eliminates the designation of Joseph as "his father," in view of the virginal conception of chap. 1. This is probably also the reason for the addition of *autou*, "his," after *hē mētēr*, "mother" in many mss. (including ms. ⌘). The real problem is the pl. ptc. *thaumazontes*, "wondering," referring to both Joseph and Mary, despite the sg. verb, with which the verse begins. There is no reason to appeal to Hebrew usage to explain away a Greek inconcinnity here.

34. *Simeon blessed them*. Luke uses here the verb *eulogein* in the sense of uttering a blessing over someone or something (see also 6:28; 9:16; 24:50,51; Acts 3:26). Contrast the NOTE on 2:28 above. The blessing does not mean that Simeon was a priest, though such activity was ascribed to priests in the OT (see Gen 14:18b-19; Num 6:23); recall that Eli, the aged priest, blessed Elkanah and Hannah (1 Sam 2:20).

Look, this child is marked for the fall and the rise of many in Israel. Lit. "behold, this one is set for . . .," or "lies (in store) for. . . ." See Luke 12:19. Though *anastasis*, which usually means "resurrection," is employed here, its meaning is rather more generic and contrasted with *ptōsis*, "fall, failure." This utterance is oracular, but is scarcely poetic.

a symbol that will be rejected. Lit. "a rejected (or opposed) symbol." The pres. ptc. *antilegomenon* has in this case future force (see BDF § 339.2b). *Sēmneion* is predicated of Jesus here, as it was of Isaiah and his children who were said to be a sign for Israel (8:18).

35. *indeed, a sword shall pierce you too*. Lit. "and a sword shall go through your own soul." For *psychē* in the sense of "self," see NOTE on 1:46. The Greek text here is difficult to translate exactly, since the sentence begins with the emphatic adv. *kai*, preceding the gen. sg. of pers. pron. (*sou*), which is followed by another intensifier, and the pron. *autēs*. Stress is thus put on Mary's individual lot; she is addressed in the second sg. in contrast to the rest of Simeon's oracle. Hence v. 35a should be understood as parenthetical, and v. 35b taken as the continuation of vv. 34b-c.

The sword that is to pass through Mary's *psychē* is related in Simeon's oracle to the fall and the rise of many in Israel. But in what sense? The most common interpretation of these words is that of the sword of anguish that she will experience as she sees Jesus crucified and his side pierced with a lance—her role as *mater dolorosa*. This does not suit the Lucan Gospel, since Mary appears at the foot of the cross only in John's Gospel (19:25-27) and only in John's Gospel is Jesus' side pierced with a lance (19:34). Mary is never said in the Lucan Gospel to be among the women who followed him from Galilee (23:49,55; 24:10). It is necessary to seek the meaning of this part of Simeon's oracle in a Lucan view of Mary.

The OT background for the saying is the idea of the sword of discrimination. The combination of *romphaia*, "sword," and the verb *dierchesthai*, "go

through," is found in the LXX of Ezek 14:17, "Let a sword go through the land that I may cut off from it man and beast." The same expression is picked up in *Sibylline Oracle* 3.316, referring to the invasion of Egypt by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, "A sword shall go through the midst of you." In this image, the sword singles out some for destruction and others for mercy (see further Ezek 5:1-2; 6:8-9). In the Lucan context the figure grows out of the idea of Jesus' role causing the fall and the rise of many in Israel. Mary, as part of Israel, will be affected too. In the Gospel proper Jesus will be depicted as one who brings dissension even within families (12:51-53). Thus, with the imagery of the sword piercing Mary, Simeon hints at the difficulty she will have in learning that obedience to the word of God will transcend even family ties. Recall how Mary will be depicted in Luke 8:21 and 11:27-28.

This attempt to explain v. 32a according to data in the Lucan Gospel likewise rules out many other attempts to explain the sword, e.g. as the sword of doubt piercing Mary during the passion of Jesus (Origen *Hom. in Lucae evangelium*, 17; GCS 49.105); or as the sword of her own violent death (Epiphanius *Panarion* 78.11; GCS 37.462); or as the sword of rejection that she too experienced in the public rejection of her son; or as the sword of illegitimacy with which Jesus was reproached because of the virginal conception; or as the sword of tragedy that she experienced at the fall of Jerusalem; or as the sword of enmity set between her seed and the seed of the serpent of Gen 3:15. All such attempts explain the sword on the basis of material extraneous to the Lucan Gospel and could scarcely have been envisaged by Luke. (See further Brown, *Birth*, 462-463; *MNT*, 156-157.)

so that. I.e. in order that. This purpose clause continues the first part of the oracle in v. 34b-c. It does not mean that the sword piercing Mary will lay bare such thoughts. In manifesting the Messiah, God's purpose is revealed; it forces human beings to react, for or against him. The cl. introduced here with *hopōs an* could also be understood as consecutive, "with the result that" (see ZBG §§ 351-353 for the blending of these clause-types, especially in Hellenistic Greek).

thoughts. The *dialogismoi* are to be understood here of evil, critical, or antagonistic thoughts, which lead to the rejection of the symbol. The noun otherwise occurs in a pejorative or hostile sense in Luke 5:22; 6:8; 9:46,47; 24:38. Here it foreshadows the end of Acts (28:27-28). In the OT cf. Pss 56:6; 94:11; 146:4. See G. Schrenk, *TDNT* 2 (1964) 97.

of many minds. Lit. "of many hearts." See NOTE on 1:51.

will be laid bare. Lit. "will be revealed." Luke uses here the verb *apokalyptein*, the cognate of the noun "revelation" which appeared in the last line of the Nunc Dimittis (v. 32).

36. *Anna*. Jesus' manifestation is made not only to an upright and devout Jewish man, but also to a woman. She is identified by Luke with the name of the mother of Samuel (1 Samuel 1-2). *Anna* is the Greek form of the Hebrew name, *Ḥannāh*, "Grace, Favor" (see NOTE on 1:27), derived from the same root (*hnn*) as "John" (see NOTE on 1:13). Though called a "prophetess" by Luke, she utters no canticle. Luke knows of other women in the Christian com-

munity who "prophesied" (Acts 21:9), but he never tells us in what sense the term is to be understood. Cf. Acts 2:17.

Phanuel. This is the Greek form of the Hebrew name *Pēnū'ēl*, used of a man in 1 Chr 4:4 and of a place in Judg 8:8 and Gen 32:32. It is translated in the LXX of the Genesis citation as *eidōs tou theou*, "face/appearance of God."

of the tribe of Asher. This identifies Anna as a member of an outlying northern tribe. Asher is the last of the tribes mentioned in the Blessing of Moses (Deut 33:24-25). It was named after Asher, the son of Jacob. In Gen 30:13 Leah plays on the meaning of the name, "Good Fortune," and exclaims, "Fortunate am I! For women (shall) count me fortunate!" Cf. Luke 1:42b,48b. In Gen 49:20 it appears as the ninth tribe in the Blessing of Jacob. What a prophetess from a tribe like Asher would be doing in the Jerusalem Temple is a bit puzzling; Luke is probably little interested in the geographical location of Asher, as his attempt to describe Anna in the following phrases would suggest.

well along in years. See NOTE on 1:7, where the same phrase occurs.

after her marriage. Lit. "from her virginity."

seven years. The Sinaitic OS version shortens it to "seven days."

37. *a widow for eighty-four years.* The prep. *heōs* before the gen. *etiōn*, "years," should mean "until, up to" eighty-four years. Though it is omitted by ms. D and some ancient versions (OL, Sinaitic OS), it has to be retained. E. J. Goodspeed (*Problems of New Testament Translation* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1945] 79-81) understood it as "until the age of eighty-four," i.e. she was now eighty-four years of age (so too Schneider, *Evangelium nach Lukas*, 72). It may also express the length of her widowhood alone.

never left the Temple area. I.e. the *hieron*; see NOTE on 2:27. For some commentators (e.g. Creed, *The Gospel*, 43) this would mean that she lived within the Temple precincts. That may be reading into the text more than Luke intends. The *Prot. Jas.* 7:1 - 8:2 depicts Mary as presented in the Temple by her parents, where she stayed when they left, "nurtured like a dove and receiving food from the hand of an angel." This, of course, is part of the later legends about Mary; and one should hesitate to understand anything similar here in the case of Anna the prophetess.

worshiped day and night. The same phrase occurs in Acts 26:7. It would denote here Anna's participation in the prayers of the people attending the daily sacrifices (see Luke 1:10). The double expressions, "day and night" and "fasting and prayer," are Lucanisms; see R. Morgenthauer, *Die lukanische Geschichtsschreibung* 1. 28.

38. *At that very time.* A Lucanism; see p. 117 above.

came up. Luke again uses the verb *ephistanai*; see NOTE on 2:9. Unlike Simeon, she is not brought there by the Spirit.

publicly praised God. Or, "thanked God." The verb *anthomologeisthai* is used only here in the NT.

she spoke. Lit. "she kept speaking," since the verb is in the impf. Her words are not quoted, but she confirms the interpretation of Simeon. It does not mean on that occasion alone, but rather that she spread abroad the word about the child.

to all who were waiting for the deliverance of Jerusalem. Recall the analogous description of Simeon in 2:25c, and cf. Isa 52:9, "he has redeemed Jerusalem." Though some mss. (D, ©, and the Koine text-tradition) read *en Ierousalēm*, "deliverance in Jerusalem," the reading "deliverance/redemption of Jerusalem" is to be preferred. It is synonymous with "the consolation of Israel." The noun *lytrōsis*, "deliverance, redemption," sometimes translates in the LXX the Hebrew noun *gē'ullāh* (e.g. Lev 25:29,29,48). At the time of the Second Revolt of Palestinian Jews against Rome (A.D. 132-135) documents were sometimes dated to the years of "the Redemption of Israel" (*lg'lt Yšr'l*—Mur 24 B 2; Mur 24 D 2; Mur 24 E 2 [DJD 2. 124-132]) or of "the Freedom of Jerusalem" (*lhrwt Yrwšlm*—Mur 25 i 1 [DJD 2. 135]). These phrases are not identical with the Lucan phrases, but they show that the latter reflect actual aspirations of Palestinian Jews of the time.

A minor ms. (348) and some ancient versions (OL, Vg) read *Israēl* here instead of *Ierousalēm*; though scarcely to be preferred, it would reflect even more closely the Palestinian expression found in some of the Murabba'at texts.

39. *they*. I.e. Mary and Joseph.

by the Law of the Lord. See NOTE on 2:23.

they returned. Refrain A occurs here again (see the outline of the infancy narrative, p. 314).

their own town of Nazareth. See NOTES on 1:26 and 2:3. This ms. D adds, "as was said by the prophet, 'He will be called a Nazorean,'" a copyist's addition from the Matthean Gospel.

40. *as the child grew up, he became strong*. This description repeats verbatim the description of John in 1:80. It constitutes refrain B (see NOTE on 1:80 and 2:52). Some mss. (©, the Koine text-tradition) add *pneumati*, "in spirit," but that is the result of harmonization of this verse with 1:80.

filled with wisdom. This is not said of John, but it prepares for the next episode, Jesus sitting among the teachers in the Temple (see 2:47; cf. 2:52).

God's favor was upon him. Such favor was claimed for Mary in 1:30. Whereas the parallel story of John depicted him in the desert until the time of his manifestation to Israel, Jesus grows up in the circle of his Galilean family. This entire v. 40 echoes the Samuel story, especially 1 Sam 2:21c, "And the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the Lord," and 2:26, "And the boy Samuel continued to grow and was favored (lit. was good) both by (lit. with) Yahweh and by human beings."

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(See further the bibliography on the Lucan Canticles, p. 370 above.)