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SONSHIP, WISDOM, INFANCY:
LUKE II. 41-51a*

Within the story of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple there are unmistakable tensions. Two themes compete for the attention of the reader: on the one hand, the surprising intelligence of the young Jesus (47); on the other hand, his awareness that God, as his real Father, has claims upon him, to which his parents have to take second place (49).¹ Luke could have given Jesus' statement on his obligations to his Father without describing the way in which he astonished the learned men in the temple. Alternatively, he could have brought out the intelligence of the child Jesus without quoting the words of 49, which seem to disparage his parents. One can see a relationship between the two themes, though it is not given in the narrative itself. The interpretation of the pericope stands or falls on the elucidation of the relationship between the two elements of the episode.

I. SOME OBSERVATIONS ON POINTS OF DETAIL

Before proceeding to discuss the problem raised, we may refer to some other questions, including traditional difficulties of the passage. A full commentary would not be appropriate here, but some points call for elucidation.

42: 'when he was twelve'. Influenced by Grotius, Lightfoot (*Horae hebraicae*) and Wettstein, later commentators such as Zahn, Plummer and De Zwaan asserted that Jewish boys were obliged to obey the law strictly from their twelfth year. Schürer objected that certain commandments were binding on considerably younger children, that the strict observance of other commandments was not tied to a particular age, but to the onset of puberty, and finally that when the Mishnah and the Talmud stated the age at which boys were obliged to begin to observe the law, it was not the twelfth but the thirteenth completed year of life.² Schürer concluded that Jesus as a twelve-year-old was not bound to celebrate the passover at Jerusalem, but had apparently been taken by his parents to accustom him to it.

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¹ The second theme is indicated rather imprecisely by R. Bultmann, *Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* (Göttingen, 1958⁴), p. 327, 'sein Weilen im Tempel, das seine religiöse Bestimmung kundtut'. B. van Iersel rightly pointed out this imprecision in 'The Finding of Jesus in the Temple', *N.T.* iv (1960), esp. p. 168.

² E. Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi* (Leipzig, 1901-09³⁻⁴), II, 496-7.

Billerbeck reached the same conclusion.¹ He too believed that Jesus' parents had taken their twelve-year-old son to Jerusalem in order to familiarize him with the observance of the law (Exod. xxiii. 17, xxxiv. 23 f.; Deut. xvi. 16 f.). The Tosefta treatise *Yoma* v. 2 states that 'children who reach the age of (sexual) maturity are familiarized with the law from a year or two before, in order to exercise them in its observance'. Billerbeck, however, made an unfortunate retreat from Schürer's view when he argued that the legal duty to visit Jerusalem for the great festivals would have fallen upon Jesus a year later, i.e. from his thirteenth year. The stipulation that a boy of thirteen was obliged to carry out the commandments (that is, *all* the commandments) can only be documented from the appendix to Mishnah treatise *Aboth* v. 21, on the phases of life, which may date only from post-talmudic times.² Moreover, although it is true that the Babylonian Talmud recognized the age of thirteen as the stage at which the duty of fasting became binding (*Ketuboth* 50a) and the Mishnah expected boys of thirteen to be punctilious in the performance of promises (*Niddah* v. 6), these two texts concern rules on limited and specific matters. Billerbeck seems to have made two dubious generalizations. Firstly, he too easily postulated the validity of guidelines which are only recorded from a later time for the period of the historical Jesus. Secondly, he too readily confused the obligation to perform fasts and fulfil promises from the age of thirteen with the duty to visit Jerusalem at the time of the passover. In reality, nothing is known of any rule by which boys of the first century A.D. were obliged to celebrate the passover in Jerusalem from their thirteenth year.

On the contrary, according to Mishnah *Hagigah* i. 1, a child was already obliged to visit the temple at passover from the moment that he was in a position to 'go up on his feet'. In the school of Shammai this was explained as 'from the time when a child was able to ride on his father's shoulders', and in the school of Hillel as 'from the time when a child was able to hold his father's hand and go up (on his own feet) from Jerusalem to the temple mount'. According to Mishnaic Law, the twelve-year-old Jesus had already been obliged to visit the temple at passover for the last ten years. Consequently, there is no need to join such commentators as Rengstorf³ and Schürmann⁴ in seeing Luke's statement that Jesus went to Jerusalem at the age of twelve as a deliberate indication of the piety of Joseph and Mary, on the grounds that they took him to Jerusalem a year before it was strictly necessary, in order to accustom him to his future obligations.

Three conclusions are apposite here.

¹ H. L. Strack-P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum N.T. aus Talmud und Midrasch* II (Munich, 1924, 1965⁴), 144-7.

² Schürer, *Geschichte*, II, 497 n. 41.

³ K. H. Rengstorf, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (Göttingen, 1952⁶) (*Das Neue Testament Deutsch*), p. 51.

⁴ H. Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, I (Freiburg/Basel/Wien, 1969) (*Herders theol. Komm. zum N.T.*), 134.

(1) It is unwarranted to comment on Luke ii. 42 that a Jewish boy became a 'son of the law' (*bar mitzvah*) at the age of twelve, as G. B. Caird wrote in 1963.¹

(2) It is not permissible to infer that the statement that Jesus' age was twelve is intended to represent him as one year younger than the age of *bar mitzvah*. A sharp dividing line between an age in which one was not yet subject to all the laws, and a period in which they were uniformly binding, did not yet exist in the first century as far as the sources reveal.

(3) The reference to the age of twelve in ii. 42 does not correspond to any caesura in the life of a Jewish boy, since the obligation to visit the temple, according to the *Mishnah*, was already incurred as early as the age of two. Luke's intention in giving Jesus' age as twelve can perhaps be understood in another way.

First, it must be pointed out that twelve is a stereotyped round figure.² The woman suffering from a haemorrhage had been troubled by her complaint for twelve years (Luke viii. 43; Mark v. 25). After the feeding of the five thousand twelve baskets of bread remained (Luke ix. 17; Mark vi. 43). Paul's first activities at Ephesus led to the rebaptism of twelve former followers of John the Baptist (Acts xix. 7). Paul defended himself before Felix by claiming that he had arrived in Jerusalem only twelve days before (Acts xxiv. 11). There is therefore reason to concur with L. Radermacher that Jesus' age of twelve in Luke ii. 42 is intended as an estimate or round figure.³

It is also clear that the first and most important impression which Luke wished to give, when he stated that Jesus was twelve, was that he was still a child. The pericope concerns Jesus as a $\pi\alpha\iota\varsigma$, as he is described in 43. According to the assumptions generally current in the time of Luke, the age of twelve had quite a different meaning for a boy from that which it had for a girl. For Greeks and Romans, Jews and Christians alike,⁴ a girl

¹ G. B. Caird, *The Gospel of St Luke* (Harmondsworth, 1963) (*The Pelican Gospel Commentaries*), p. 66.

² Cf. Rengstorff in *Th. Wb. zum N.T.*, II, 322. By a 'round' number I mean not only that such numbers convey a particular impression of completeness, but also that because of their function they can be used to indicate quantities rather smaller or greater than the 'round' figure, i.e. as approximations.

³ L. Radermacher, 'Christus unter den Schriftgelehrten', *Rhein. Mus.* LXXIII (1920), 232-9. Independently of Radermacher, M. Dibelius saw the figure twelve as a round number, but also referred to the sacral character and biological significance of the age of twelve. This explains why the same age also plays a role in legends of the Buddha and Si Osire. M. Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (Tübingen, 1959³), p. 104.

⁴ See e.g. M. Kaser, *Das römische Privatrecht*, II (Munich, 1959), 111 and 78-9; Strack-Billerbeck, II, 10 (*ad* Mark v. 42); p. 374 (*ad* John ii. 1). For Gortyn, see G. Dellings, in *RAC* IV, 684. For Egypt, *ibid.* p. 685. For Rome, *ibid.* p. 687. The marriageable age for a man was fourteen according to Babylonian Talmud, *Kiddushin* 29b. In ecclesiastical sources of the third and fourth centuries it is recommended that boys should be married as *adolescentes* (Rufinus' translation of $\nu\epsilon\omicron\iota$) before their sexual desires reach a climax (Ps. Clem., *Hom.* v, 25; *id.*, *Ep. ad Jac.* vii; *Const. Ap.* IV, 11). Apparently, marriage between the ages of fourteen and eighteen was regarded as ideal for boys, while in Christian circles also girls were regarded as marriageable at the age of twelve. Indeed in the *Prot. Jac.* viii, Mary is betrothed to Joseph at twelve, because of her puberty. True, Mary's marriage with Joseph did not lead to a *matrimonium consummatum*, but in c. x they were certainly regarded by the priest as married: see E. de Strycker, *La forme la plus ancienne du Protévangile de Jacques* (Brussels, 1961),

was marriageable at twelve or twelve and a half. The death of Jairus' daughter was thus particularly distressing because she was, at twelve, on the threshold of life as a woman. Luke was not unaware of this element in the narrative, and perhaps for that reason he explicitly stated her age right at the beginning of the pericope, whereas Mark had mentioned her age only in the last verse but one (Luke viii. 42; Mark v. 42).¹ A twelve-year-old boy, on the other hand, was still to be considered as a child, παῖς, for two or three years more.

Boys were not regarded as adolescents (ἔφηβοι, μαιράκια) until the age of fourteen, sometimes fifteen² or sixteen.³ The elegy in which Solon divided life into ten seven-year periods, and in which the child, παῖς, reached adolescence at fourteen, had a great influence, which can be observed among others in Aristotle, the Peripatetics and the physician Diocles of Carystos (fourth century B.C.).⁴ As well known as that of Solon was the scheme of Hippocrates, under which life fell into eight phases of seven years, with children again reaching pubescence after the fourteenth year.⁵ The idea that life developed in seven-year phases, marked by the κλιμακτῆρες or κλιμακτηρικοί ἐνιαυτοί, the years seven, fourteen, twenty-one etc., which were felt to be dangerous, was widely disseminated by hellenistic astrologers, and even believed by Christians.⁶ The Stoics held that children of about fourteen could distinguish right and wrong.⁷ Philo, who refers with evident approval to the life-schemes of both Solon and Hippocrates,⁸ thought that man attained not only physical but also intellectual maturity with the fourteenth year (*Leg. All.*, i. 10). In the mid-second century Claudius Ptolemy, who gave his name to a system of geography, was of the opinion that children were physically and mentally formed in the period up to their fourteenth year.⁹ In Egypt under the Romans, boys of fourteen were accounted ἔφηβοι, and there – and probably in all hellenized cities¹⁰ – sons of good families

p. 111. In *Ev. Ps.-Mt.* viii, Mary was betrothed to Joseph at the age when other women 'virois in coniugio sunt adeptae'.

¹ Schürmann, p. 490.

² Varro, according to Censorinus xiv. 2 and the scholiast on Lucian's *Catapl.* 1: "Ἐφηβοὶ καλοῦνται οἱ ἀπὸ 12" (see *Theas. l. Graecae*, s.v. ἔφηβος). Martin P. Nilsson, *Die hellenistische Schule* (Munich, 1955), p. 34, writes 'die Pubertät trat nach der allgemeinen Meinung der Griechen in dem fünfzehnten Lebensjahr ein', but does not cite any proofs.

³ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, i, ii. 4 and 8 says that the Persians place the boundary between παῖδες and ἔφηβοι at the age of sixteen or seventeen. Cf. p. 322, n. 1.

⁴ F. Boll, 'Die Lebensalter', *Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum* xvi (1913), 89-145, esp. pp. 115-17.

⁵ H. I. Marrou, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'antiquité* (Paris, 1965⁶), p. 161. Marrou mentions five classical authors who go back to Hippocrates.

⁶ Varro, *apud* Gellius iii, x. 9; Augustus *apud* Gellius xv, vii. 2-3; Plin. *Epp.* ii, xx. 3-4; Tert. *Idol.* ix. 9 and the commentary on the last passage by P. G. van der Nat (ed.), *Q.S.F. Tertulliani De Idololatria* (Leiden, 1960), pp. 135-6.

⁷ Aëtius, v, 23 (Diels, *Doxographi*, p. 435): περί δὲ τὴν δευτέραν ἑβδομάδα ἔννοια γίνεται καλοῦ τε καὶ κακοῦ καὶ τῆς διδασκαλίας αὐτῶν. See, for a discussion of this passage, A. Bonhoeffer, *Epictet und die Stoa* (Stuttgart, 1890), pp. 204-7.

⁸ *Opif. mundi* 102-5.

⁹ F. Boll, 'Lebensalter', p. 121.

¹⁰ Marrou and Nilsson disagree on whether *epheboi* outside Egypt entered the gymnasium at 14/15 (Nilsson) or at 18 (Marrou). The Icarian epitaph mentioned below seems to support Nilsson. See Nilsson, p. 36, and Marrou's review of Nilsson in *L'Antiquité Classique* xxv (1956), 234-40.

entered the gymnasia, the grammar schools of the ancient world, at the same age. Also, at fourteen Egyptians became liable to the poll tax, for which purpose population registers were drawn up every fourteen years (κατ' οἰκίαν ἀπογραφή, cf. Luke ii. 1). Boys initiated in the service of Isis let a lock of their hair grow, the so-called Horus-lock, which was cut off at the age of fourteen.¹ It is of great importance too that in Syria boys of fourteen were liable to the poll tax, as Ulpian informs us: *in Syriis a quatuordecim annis masculi, a duodecim feminae usque ad sexagesimum quintum annum tributo capitis obligantur* (*Digest.* L, 15, 3 pr.).

For a variety of reasons, the completion of the fourteenth year was held to be of cardinal importance. Such significance was attached to it that the age of twelve was felt to be a stage of incompleteness. A boy of twelve had not yet put his childhood behind him, and had not yet reached the first stage of maturity. A striking illustration of this is provided by an inscription found on the Aegean island of Icaros, dating from the second or third century A.D.² It is an epitaph in which a mother mourns the death of her twelve-year-old son; the boy's fate is all the more lamentable, she says, because he was not permitted to put on the cloak of the *ephebe*, nor to become a pupil in the gymnasium.

I am the grave of the twelve-year-old Philocles, set up by his mother,
 Philocratea, who grieves for her unfortunate child;
 Poor boy, he was not given the time to don the cloak of youth,
 nor to see Hermes, the protector of the gymnasium.
 Δωδεχέτους τάφος εἰμί Φιλοκλέος, ὃν θέτο μάτηρ
 ἀχρυσμένα λυγρὸν παῖδα Φιλοκράτεια·
 σχέτλιος, οὐδ' ἔφθη χλαμύδας περὶ χρωτὶ βαλέσθαι
 οὐδ' ἔσιδεῖν Ἐρμῆν γυμνασίου πρόεδρον.

The most notable implication of the statement that Jesus was twelve is therefore that he was not yet fully grown, had not reached the first stage of maturity, but was still in a phase of physical, spiritual and intellectual development. The episode of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple is an incident from his years of growth. Luke can therefore preface it by saying in 40, 'the child grew big and strong', and add after it in 52, 'Jesus grew up and advanced in wisdom'. In a similar way, Philo (*Leg. All.* 1, 10) had earlier believed that a person was already endowed with reason (τὴν λογικὴν ἔξι, 'the reasoning faculty', in G. H. Whitaker's translation) at seven, but did not become a completely rational creature (λογικός) until fourteen.

It is now clear that the reference to Jesus' age has a specific function in the narrative, and also a particular purpose on the level of telling the story. In

¹ A. N. Zadoks-Josephus Jitta, in W. J. Verdenius *et al.*, *Antieke Jeugd* (s. 1, 1968), p. 18.

² W. Peek, *Griechische Vers-Inschriften*, 1 (Berlin, 1955), 36, no. 119. The important place of ἐφηβ(ε)ία in the life of boys and their parents is the subject of E. Griessmair, *Das Motiv der mors immatura in den griechischen metrischen Grabinschriften* (Innsbruck, 1966) (*Commentationes Aenipontanae* xvii), pp. 55-60.

47, mention is made of the intelligence which Jesus displayed. The information that Jesus was only twelve throws this wisdom into the desired prominence. Luke presents Jesus as still immature, not fully developed either spiritually or rationally, in order to make his wisdom appear all the more clearly.

The age of twelve is repeatedly referred to in Greek and hellenistic-Jewish literature with the same purpose as in Luke ii. 42. Xenophon relates that Cyrus, the son of Cambyses, at the age of twelve, when he was still in the class of children (παῖδες)¹ showed himself superior to all the boys of his age. He learned faster than others and 'did everything well, in the manner of a (full-grown) man' (καλῶς καὶ ἀνδρείως). There is a tradition according to which Epicurus began to apply himself to philosophy when he was fourteen, that is when he had become an *ephebe*.² That was rather early as students of philosophy were expected to have completed the ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία of the *ephebe* school, the gymnasium, and consequently to begin philosophy when they were about eighteen.³ None the less, Epicurus' biographer, Ariston of Ceos (c. 225 B.C.) writes that 'Epicurus began to concern himself with philosophy when he was twelve' (*Diog. Laert.* x, 14).

Josephus says that Samuel was twelve when he began to prophesy (*Ant.* v, x, 4. 348). Various authors, including D. Völter⁴ and E. Burrows,⁵ see this as an indication that Luke modelled his account of Jesus in the temple on traditions concerning Samuel. However, one should rather conclude that Josephus and Luke used the same motif independently of each other, the motif which Josephus himself describes when he says of the young Moses, 'his wisdom did not increase with his age, but far excelled it'.⁶ Again, Solomon, the wise man par excellence of the Old Testament, is said to have ascended the throne at the age of twelve, in a Septuagint passage which has no counterpart in the Masoretic text.⁷ In the Epistle of Maria of Cassobola (fourth century A.D.), ch. iii, Solomon is said to have been only twelve when he delivered his famous judgment on the two women.⁸ In Christian

¹ *Cyropaedia* i, ii. 8. According to Xenophon's account, Persians were παῖδες until their sixteenth or seventeenth year, ἔφηβοι until their twenty-sixth or twenty-seventh, τέλειοι ἄνδρες until their fifty-first or fifty-second, and γεραιότεροι from fifty-two. Cf. p. 320, n. 3.

² *Diog. Laert.*, x, 2. Diogenes is probably citing Heraclides Lembus. Apollonius of Tyana is also reputed to have begun to enjoy the higher educational subjects of rhetoric and philosophy at the age of fourteen, that is the age at which other boys were only beginning their secondary education (*Philostr.* i, vii).

³ Marrou, *Histoire*, p. 310: 'Il (l'enseignement philosophique) suppose, au départ, un étudiant ayant achevé sa formation secondaire.'

⁴ D. Völter, *Die evangelischen Erzählungen von der Geburt und Kindheit Jesu kritisch untersucht* (Strassburg, 1911), p. 77.

⁵ E. Burrows, *The Gospel of the Infancy* (London, 1940), pp. 23 and 3.

⁶ *Ant.* ii, ix. 6, 230, already cited by Wettstein *ad* Luke ii. 47: σύνεσις δὲ οὐ κατὰ τὴν ἡλικίαν ἐφύετο αὐτῷ, τοῦ δὲ ταύτης μέτρου πολὺ κρείττω καὶ πρεσβυτέραν διεδείκνυε ταύτης τὴν περιουσίαν ἐν ταῖς παιδείαις.

⁷ I (= III) Kings ii. 12. The same tradition occurs in Eupolemus (second century B.C.), *apud* Eus., *Praep. Ev.* ix, 30, and in a number of patristic authors mentioned by J. B. Cotelier *ad Const. Apost.* ii, 1 (in the Clericus edition of 1724, i, 216).

⁸ *Ignatii et Polycarpi epistulae*, ed. Th. Zahn (Lipsiae, 1876), p. 176. Cf. p. 323, n. 5.

times, perhaps under the influence of Luke ii. 42, stories of amazingly precocious evidence of wisdom and spiritual maturity by twelve-year-olds were also related of Daniel,¹ Alexander the Great,² Moses³ and Cambyses.⁴

Possibly not all the post-Lucan authors who mentioned wise twelve-year-olds still realized the impression which Luke had aroused in his contemporaries when he described Jesus at this age. But the author of the Epistle of Maria of Cassobola shows some signs of fully appreciating Luke's intention. Just like Xenophon with Cyrus and Josephus with Moses, the author of this letter points out with reference to Solomon that the wisdom of the child (παῖς) was not that of the youth (μειράκιον) but that of a full-grown man (τέλειος ἀνήρ).

When the wise Solomon was twelve years old, he saw through the insoluble problem of the women, concerning their children, so that all the people were astounded by the great wisdom of the child, and honoured him not as a boy but as a man.⁵

The age of twelve is mentioned in order to draw a sharp contrast between the immaturity of the child, in terms of years, and the maturity of his reason. The contrast is further accentuated by the author of the Greek Gospel of Thomas, who in his paraphrase of Luke ii. 47 writes 'all were amazed at the way in which, though still a *paidion*, he confounded the *presbyteroi*' (ix. 2). Solomon, Cyrus and Jesus were not just young at twelve. They were not even *μειράκια*, *pubescentes*, they had not reached the phase of maturing, puberty.⁶ According to hellenistic concepts they had not reached the age of secondary education. All the more reason, then, for the reader to marvel at their wisdom.

We conclude that Luke's statement (ii. 42) that Jesus was aged twelve was not related to the age of *bar mitzvah*, which was not then fixed. It implies

¹ Ignatius, *ad Magnesios*, long recension, iii. 1; Ps.-Chrysostom (*PG* LV, 567 and LVI, 43); Sulpicius Severus (*PL* xx, 128); the Syro-hexaplaric translation of *Susannah* (in Walton's *Polyglot*, London 1657, vol. iv); this version of *Susannah* 1 (= Daniel xiii. 1) runs: 'Cum esset Daniel annorum duodecim, vir erat nomine Joacim. (2) Qui uxorem habebat Susannam...'; *The Thousand and One Nights*, 394 (tr. E. Littmann, Leipzig, 1928, III, 528).

² Ps.-Callisthenes, *Vita Alexandri*, ed. H. van Thiel (Darmstadt, 1974), I, xiv(-xvi).

³ *Midrash Shemoth Rabbah* (eleventh/twelfth century?) v. 2 (translated by S. M. Lehrman in *Midrash Rabbah*, ed. H. Freedman and M. Simon, III, Exodus (London, 1951), p. 82).

⁴ Herodotus III, iii, *varia lectio* cited by Wettstein *ad* Luke ii. 42.

⁵ *Epistola Mariae Castabalensis*, ed. Zahn (cf. p. 322, n. 8), p. 176: Σολομών δὲ ὁ σοφὸς δυσκοαῖδεκα τυγγάνων ἑτῶν συνῆκε τὸ μέγα τῆς ἀγνωσίας τῶν γυναικῶν ἐπὶ τοῖς σφετέροις τέκνοις ζήτημα ὡς πάντα τὸν λαὸν ἐκστῆνα ἐπὶ τῇ τοσαύτῃ τοῦ παιδὸς σοφίᾳ καὶ φοβηθῆνα οὐχ ὡς μειράκιον, ἀλλ' ὡς τέλειον ἄνδρα. Origen's remark quoted by H. Smith, *Ante-Nicene Exegesis of the Gospels* I (London, 1925), 273-4: 'He (Jesus) did not display wisdom beyond His age, but at the time when even in us reason is wont to be completed through judgment, i.e. at the twelfth year', seems to be wrong and conflicting with his statement in *Hom. XIX in Lucam* in *Werke* IX (Berlin, 1959) (*GCS*), p. 115; πρὸ γὰρ ἑτῶν δώδεκα φιλοῦς ἀνθρώπος οὐ χωρεῖ πληρότητα σοφίας.

⁶ To my knowledge, Erasmus, in his *Paraphrases*, is the only expositor to draw attention, at the words, 'when he was twelve years old', to the boundary between *pueritia* and *ephebia*, though in a sense different from that given above: 'Porro quum iam accedentibus annis firmior esset pueritia, ad ephebiam accedens, annos nato duodecim...'

nothing about the piety of Jesus' parents. It stresses that the wisdom of the child Jesus was truly extraordinary.

46: 'After three days'. Jesus' parents recovered their son after three days. Many expositors follow Grotius on this passage, even in the formulation of their comments. Grotius wrote: 'on the first day they travelled outwards, on the second day they returned by the same way, on the third day they found the missing boy.'¹ This explanation has been almost universally accepted, e.g. by C. T. Kuinoel (1817), F. Godet, H. J. Holtzmann,² J. M. S. Baljon, De Zwaan, Klostermann and Schürmann. Yet it is not free from objections.

To begin with, it is by no means certain from what day the third day must be reckoned. One can count them as Grotius did and allow one day for the journey from Jerusalem, one day to return to Jerusalem, and one day to search in Jerusalem. Alternatively, one can count them thus: one day's search on the way back, and two days' search in Jerusalem. A third possibility is that all three days of the search were spent in Jerusalem. Another problem is that 'after three days' can also mean 'on the fourth day'.³

Not only does Luke's narrative pose the foregoing problems, but it is clear that Luke did not concern himself in the least with the question of how the three (or four) days were to be divided. The problem simply does not seem to have presented itself to him. The reason for this is not that Grotius' interpretation is so manifestly obvious, as is often alleged, but rather that for Luke, 'after three days' meant 'after several days' or 'after some days had passed'. In this case it was completely irrelevant when the days were to be counted from.

As early as 1920, L. Radermacher⁴ argued that three should be taken only as a stereotyped round figure for a plurality, or in his own words, 'eine rein typische Summenzahl'. In his well-known article of 1903, 'Dreiheit'⁵, H. Usener had collected material, especially from folk-tales, which demonstrated that three was often used as a round number. Radermacher then pointed out that the same had held true of Homer, Greek comedy and above all Herodotus. In the chronicle-style, as employed by Herodotus, many events tend to last three days, three months, three years, etc., but it is a

¹ 'Diem unum iter fecerant, altero remensi erant idem iter, tertio demum quaesitum inveniunt.' Grotius was not the first to suggest this interpretation, which had already been given by Fr. Lucas Brugensis (1549-1619) in his *Commentarius in sanctum J.C. evangelium secundum Lucam* (Antverpiae, 1712), *ad loc.* Lucas Brugensis adds to his interpretation: 'Sic recte Euthymius distinguit dies'. For Euthymius Zigabenus' commentary, see Migne, *PG* cxxxix, 898.

² H. J. Holtzmann, *Die Synoptiker* (Tübingen/Leipzig, 1901³) (*Hand-Commentar zum N.T.*, 1), p. 322.

³ N. Walker, 'After three days', *N.T.* iv (1960), 261-2.

⁴ L. Radermacher, 'Christus unter den Schriftgelehrten', *Rhein. Mus.* LXXIII (1920), 232-9. R. Laurentin, *Structure et théologie de Luc I-II* (Paris, 1957), p. 212, no. 335, states wrongly that Radermacher's article appeared in *Hermes*. The same mistake occurs, oddly enough, in F. Neiryneck, *Evangelium Lucae* (Louvain, 1966) (*Studiorum N.T. auxilia* III), p. 106.

⁵ H. Usener, 'Dreiheit', *Rhein. Mus.* LVIII (1903), 1 ff., 161 ff., 321 ff.

question of a rough estimate, which cannot be accurately divided into phases. Radermacher claimed not only that the figure three was stereotyped in such cases, but also that these indications of time cannot pretend to any exactness.¹

In 1958 J. B. Bauer drew attention to the fact that in the Old Testament also, the number three often refers to a limited but unspecified quantity.² Rachab gave the spies the advice to conceal themselves for three days (Jos. ii. 16); Nineveh was so great that it took three days to pass through it (Jonah iii. 3); Jonah was three days and three nights in the great fish (Jonah ii. 1). Sometimes three is felt to be many, sometimes few. Hezekiah recovered in *only* three days (II Kings xx. 8) but the pillage and slaughter in Jerusalem after its conquest by Antiochus lasted three full days (II Macc. v. 14). Bauer rightly observed that the same phenomenon can be seen in the New Testament. In Acts xxviii. 17, Paul invited the Jews to hear him after only three days, that is, shortly after his arrival in Rome. But Joseph and Mary did not find their son until they had sought him for three days – we would say, ‘after days of searching’.

Commentators and translators have continued to reject the interpretation of Radermacher and Bauer. Yet G. Delling, in his article τρεῖς in Kittel's *Theologisches Wörterbuch*, had to agree that in Acts and Luke the word ‘three’ is often used in approximate indications of time. Months are hardly associated with any other figure except three (Acts vii. 20, xix. 8, xx. 3, xxviii. 11) with one exception (Acts xviii. 11), in which case, however, the indication is also global — a year and six months, or half of three years. The phrase ‘three days’ occurs five times (ix. 9, xxv. 1, xxviii. 7, 12, 17) always with an approximate intention, and in most cases to be interpreted as a short period (the four last named cases). According to Delling, Luke often applied the figure three to periods of time for which he lacked more precise information, as is clear from his references to periods of months.³

Indeed, one can draw two conclusions from the fourteen cases in Luke and Acts which refer to periods of three hours, months, days, sabbaths or years:

(1) the figure three does not claim to be completely precise, and can refer to a rather shorter or longer period;

¹ This last point is misunderstood by E. Klostermann, who in his commentary on Luke in the *Handbuch zum N.T.* objects to Radermacher, ‘niemand erkennt, daß dies an sich eine typische Zahl ist (gegen Radermacher)’. In many cases, according to Radermacher, three is not only intended as a ‘typical’ number but also not completely exact. Cf. F. Boll, ‘Lebensalter’ (see p. 320, n. 4), p. 99: ‘Daß... die Drei... einmal die unbestimmte Vielheit dargestellt hat, ist mir... sehr wohl glaublich.’

² J. B. Bauer, ‘Drei Tage’, *Biblica* xxxix (1958), 354–8. See also J. Jeremias, ‘Die Drei-Tage-Worte der Evangelien’, in: *Tradition und Glaube. Festgabe für K. G. Kuhn* (Göttingen, 1971), pp. 221–9, see p. 226: ‘... die Zeitangabe “am dritten Tag” (bezeichnet) keineswegs notwendig den dritten Kalendertag, sondern hat häufig, ja überwiegend, die vage Bedeutung “nach ein paar Tagen”.’

³ *Th. Wb. z. N.T.* viii (1969), esp. p. 219, lines 7–16: ‘Es bestätigt sich auch durch andere Angaben in Ag, dass Lk in seiner Darstellung die Ereignisse absichtlich durch Angaben von Zeitabständen miteinander verbindet. Mangels genauerer Daten sieht er sich dabei des öfteren zur Einsetzung runder Zahlen genötigt, wie für die Monatsangaben ohne weiteres deutlich ist.’

(2) 'three' tends in these cases to be an idiomatic expression for 'several', sometimes with the connotation that the period stated is long, sometimes short. The Greek *Thesaurus* rightly states that τρεῖς is sometimes used to indicate a small number, *exiguus numerus*, and sometimes a large one, *multitudo*. Lampe's *Lexicon* too now registers the fact that τρεῖς occurs as 'indefinite number indicating a few only, -'three or four''.¹

Luke's use of the figure three in references to time therefore compels us to interpret Luke ii. 46 μετὰ ἡμέρας τρεῖς as 'only after several days'. It is not admissible to divide the days precisely into separate stages of the journey made by Mary and Joseph. Such a division misinterprets the global character of the figure three. A dynamic equivalent translation would, in order to prevent misunderstanding, and avoid interpretations which Luke did not intend, have to say something like 'only after days of searching'.

Another misunderstanding must be abandoned. Time and again, commentators have fallen into the temptation of interpreting 'three days' as an allusion to Jesus' resurrection 'on the third day'. It is not surprising that Origen and Ambrose did this, or even Bengel in the eighteenth century, in view of their hermeneutics, but recent writers such as Dupont², Glombitza,³ Laurentin,⁴ and J. K. Elliott⁵ should have resisted the temptation. Their interpretation can be shown to be misguided. True, Mark says three times that Jesus shall rise 'after three days' (μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας, viii. 31, ix. 31, x. 34), but Luke refuses, when dealing with the resurrection, to speak of 'after three days'. In his own words, the resurrection took place 'on the third day'. Luke changed Mark's phrase μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας to τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ (ix. 22) or τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ (xviii. 33)⁶ or else omitted any reference to time alto-

¹ The number three often has an analogous function in Latin literature. *Tres* is repeatedly used to denote a small number (see Lewis and Short) but it can also be a stereotyped figure denoting a relatively large number; see, e.g., Gellius v, xiv, 24, *triennium totum*, and 26, *viam ferme tridui*. The stereotyped use of 'three' in indications of time can also be well illustrated from *Evangeliium infantiae arabice*, ed. H. Sike (Trajecti ad Rhenum, 1697): *triduum* pp. 39, 91, 157; *triennis*, pp. 23, 125; *triennium*, p. 71 bis.

² J. Dupont, 'Jésus à douze ans', in *Fête de la Sainte Famille* (Bruges, 1961) (*Assemblées du Seigneur* xiv), pp. 25-43, esp. p. 42.

³ O. Glombitza, 'Der zwolfjährige Jesus', *N.T.* v (1962), 1-4, esp. p. 2.

⁴ R. Laurentin, *Jésus au temple* (Paris, 1966), pp. 101-2.

⁵ J. K. Elliott, 'Does Luke 2: 41-52 anticipate the resurrection?' *Exp. T.* LXXXIII (1971-72), 87-9.

⁶ It must be admitted that in both cases, striking 'minor agreements' between Matthew and Luke are to be seen; see the synopsis on Mark viii. 31 and x. 34. Yet for three reasons it is not absolutely necessary to assume that Luke and Matthew in these passages are preserving the text of a proto-Mark, from which Mark himself has deviated. Firstly, in the case of Mark x. 34, Luke and Matthew differ in the order in which they put ἡμέρᾳ and τρίτῃ. The order used in Luke xviii. 33 occurs frequently in Luke, never in Matthew; cf. Acts xiii. 33 ἐν τῷ Ψαλμῷ τῷ δευτέρῳ, Luke i. 26 τῷ μηνί τῷ ἑκτῷ, xxiii. 44 ὥρα ἕκτη, Acts x. 9 ὥραν ἕκτην, Luke i. 59 τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ογδόῃ (cf. Acts vii. 8 = Gen. xxi. 4), Acts xix. 9 ὥρας πέμπτῃς, Luke iii. 1 ἐν ἡμέρᾳ δὲ πεντακισθέστῃ. The order in Luke xviii. 33, therefore, looks redactional. Secondly, Luke xviii. 33 has ἀναστήσεται as in Mark x. 34 and only Matthew has ἐγερθήσεται; this situation is most easily explained by assuming that Matthew made an alteration in Mark, and not vice versa. Thirdly, Jesus' resurrection on the third day was a central theme in early Christian theology, for which a fairly definite terminology existed. It is not impossible that Matthew and Luke, independently of each other, adapted the phraseology of Mark viii. 31 to the expression of

gether (ix. 44// Mark ix. 31). Where Luke provides information on the resurrection independent of Mark, he says that it took place τῆ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ (xxiv. 7, 46; Acts x. 40).¹ Moreover, the words μετὰ ἡμέρας τρεῖς in Luke ii. 46 probably also betray the editorial hand of the third evangelist, as does the expression τῆ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ elsewhere. The order of noun and cardinal is known as Lucan from the redaction of ix. 33, σκηνὸς τρεῖς, Acts ix. 9, ἦν ἡμέρας τρεῖς μὴ βλέπων with Lucan *conjugatio periphrastica*, and xxviii. 17, ἐγένετο δὲ μετὰ ἡμέρας τρεῖς συγκαλέσασθαι αὐτόν with the Lucan ἐγένετο *c. Acc. c. Inf.*²

Luke as redactor very probably used two stock expressions, μετὰ ἡμέρας τρεῖς and τῆ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ (or τῆ ἡμέρᾳ τῆ τρίτῃ). Of these, he chose in ii. 42 the very one which was *not* connected with the terminology of the resurrection. In ii. 42 he seems not to have had the resurrection in mind.³

46: 'In the temple'. Jesus was found in the temple, sitting among the teachers. Since the seventeenth century, commentators on this passage have occasionally suggested that the episode of Jesus and the doctors took place in a synagogue within the temple. As far as I know, this interpretation occurred for the first time in a correspondence of 1632 between J. Cloppenburg and L. De Dieu, reformed ministers at The Brill and Leiden respectively.⁴ Cloppenburg wished to interpret ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ καὶ κατ' οἶκον in Acts v. 42 as 'in the temple squares and in the temple synagogue'. When De Dieu took a sceptical view of this proposal, Cloppenburg persisted in his argument that the existence of synagogues within the temple had to be conceded, as otherwise, when the temple was thronged on feast days, none could have made himself audible, and conversations such as those implied in Luke ii. 46 would have been impossible.

The view that there was a synagogue in the temple in which the events of

I Cor. xv. 4 ἐγήγερται τῆ ἡμέρᾳ τῆ τρίτῃ while retaining the Marcan word order (numeral-noun-verb). In the episode of the last supper, too, Luke (xxii. 19-20) shows a strikingly close relationship to I Cor. xi. 24-5.

¹ The reason why, according to Luke, the resurrection did not take place μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας, but τῆ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ is, presumably, that in Lucan idiom, τρεῖς could refer to an indefinite number, while τρίτος simply referred to the exact number three. With reference to the resurrection, which according to the ancient system of inclusive reckoning took place after three days precisely (*Th. Wb. z. N.T.* vii, 29, n. 226), the ambivalent expression was less suitable, and the more exact one with τρίτος was preferred by Luke.

² H. J. Cadbury, *The Style and Literary Method of Luke* (Cambridge, 1920), II, 153: 'In the position of the numeral adjective [by which Cadbury means the *nomen numerale cardinale*] Luke's changes tend towards the normal order, [i.e. postposition of the cardinal].² Luke ix. 13 // Mark vi. 38; Luke ix. 14 // Mark vi. 44; Luke ix. 17 // Mark vi. 43; Luke ix. 33 // Mark ix. 5; Luke xi. 26 // Matthew xii. 45; in Acts τρεῖς precedes the noun on three occasions and follows it on nine, while in one case the order is uncertain (xxviii. 7).

³ Schürmann also rightly states this, but without any argument: *Das Lukasevangelium*, p. 134, 'An die drei Tage bis zur Auferstehung soll man hier schwerlich denken.'

⁴ J. Cloppenburg, *Deliciae Biblicae Brielenenses, sive collationes . . . cum L. de Dieu*, most easily accessible in *Critici Sacri*, IX (London, 1660¹), cols. 3967-4004, see 4000-1, sub '17 Julii/Septemb./Octobris 1632'; in the Amsterdam edition of 1698³ this is vol. VIII, cols. 1457-8.

Luke ii. 46 took place, was reformulated half a century later in J. Lightfoot's *Horae hebraicae*,¹ and based on rabbinical sources. Lightfoot drew attention to the gloss of Rashi (c. 1100), 'there was a synagogue near the temple forecourt (*atrium, azarah*) on the temple mount', referring to Mishnah *Yoma* vii. 1, a passage in which it is stated that on the day of atonement the high priest read certain sections of the law, the scroll being handed by the attendant (*chazzan*) of the *kēnēset* to the head of the *kēnēset*, and by him, as head of the priests, to the high priest. *Kēnēset* means both 'assembly' in the general sense, and 'congregation assembling in the *bet hakkēnēset*', i.e. 'synagogue community'. Lightfoot, without any compelling reason, thought that the second and more specific meaning was the one applicable in *Yoma* vii. 1, and thus saw this text as a reference to a synagogue in the temple precincts. As, moreover, such tannaitic sources as *Yoma* 69b inform us that biblical texts were read in the forecourt (*azarah*), there is no need to regard the attendant and the head of the *kēnēset* mentioned in *Yoma* vii. 1 as functionaries of a synagogue: one can see the 'attendant' and the 'head of the community' as representatives of the Pharisees, who according to *Taanith* iv. 1-2 took part in the service as laymen, alongside the Sadducee officials.

The Christian Hebraists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries such as H. Relandus² of Utrecht, C. Vitranga³ of Franeker and J. G. Carpzovius⁴ of Lübeck, none the less uncritically adopted and disseminated the view of Lightfoot. In our time, Lightfoot's opinion has been shared by W. Schrage in the *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (VII, 821) and S. Safrai in the *Compendium Rerum Judaicarum* (II, 865, 904, 912). Among New Testament commentators, Billerbeck⁵ held that *Yoma* vii. 1 seems to assume the existence of a synagogue on the temple mount, although he realizes that Luke ii. 46 does not demand that the episode which it relates should have taken place in a synagogue or *bet ha-midrash*. Others, including G. Schrenk in the *Theologisches Wörterbuch*⁶, suggest that the episode should be located in a *bet ha-midrash*. In his recent commentary on Luke, H. Schürmann raises the possibility that the doctors before whom Jesus displayed his wisdom gave lessons in a temple synagogue on the temple mount.

It was Alfred Edersheim, in his book *The Life and Times of Jesus the*

¹ J. Lightfoot, *Horae hebraicae*, in *Opera Omnia*, II (Roterodami, 1686), 500; II, 500 in the Franeker edition of 1699. Oddly enough, Lightfoot located Luke ii. 46 ff., in his *Chronica (Opera Omnia*, II, 5-6) not in a synagogue, but in an assembly room of one of the three *synedria* which he distinguished.

² *Antiquitates sacrae veterum Hebraeorum* (Trajecti ad Rhenum, 1741⁴), p. 44. I owe these references to Relandus, Vitranga and Carpzov to Edersheim (see p. 329, n. 1).

³ C. Vitranga, *De Synagoga vetere libri iii* (Franequerae, 1696) (and Leucopetrae, 1726), pp. 38-9. Vitranga ascribes the 'gloss' quoted by Lightfoot ('synagoga proxima erat Atrio in monte domus') to Jarchi, but 'Jarchi' is the name often given, by Jews and Christians, to Rashi.

⁴ J. G. Carpzov, *Apparatus historico-criticus* (Francoforti/Lipsiae, 1748), p. 136.

⁵ Strack-Billerbeck, II, 150.

⁶ *Th. Wb. z. N.T.* III, 235. Schrenk cites G. Dalman, *Orte und Wege Jesu* (1924³), p. 317, but in the first and second editions which were accessible to me (1919¹, p. 277; 1921², p. 242) Dalman locates Luke ii. 46 'wahrscheinlich in den Hallen dieses Hofes (= des Frauenhofes!)'.

Messiah,¹ who subjected to a critical appraisal the passages from rabbinic literature which had been brought forward to demonstrate the existence of a temple synagogue, and showed that none of these texts in any way justified the conclusions drawn from them. S. B. Hoenig of Yeshiva University devoted a special study to the presumed temple synagogue in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* of 1963.² Hoenig investigated anew the sources on the basis of which it had been claimed that a temple synagogue had existed within the temple area, and showed that these assertions derived from a misinterpretation of various passages in the Mishnah (*Tamid* iv. 3-v. 1; *Yoma* vii. 1; *Sotah* vii. 8; *Taanith* ii. 5). Later rabbinical authors had sought to find in these passages support for their view that synagogue services had been performed, either in the *lishkat haggazit*, or on the *azarah* (or in the court of the women), or on the temple mount. But closer study shows that in not one of these cases is it a question of the liturgical practices of a synagogue. 'No proof is to be deduced from these sources of a definite establishment as a *Synagogue locale* within the temple precincts, or even of any fixed *bet-midrash* there. Such are only later retrojective portrayals.'³

The temple synagogue will have to disappear from commentaries on Luke, but Luke's impression of teaching being given within the temple appears clearly from Acts. John and Peter instructed the people (iv. 2) in the colonnade (στοά) of Solomon (iii. 11). Luke also assumed that the Apostles in general used to teach the people in the colonnade of Solomon (v. 12, 21, 25). Luke localized the teaching given in the temple to the colonnades of the temple terraces. Luke's inaccurate idea of the topography of the temple area is plain from the fact that he situates the colonnade of Solomon in the area to which access was given by the Beautiful Gate.⁴ Haenchen rightly observes that the reference to the colonnade in iii. 11 served to heighten the local colour. But it was, moreover, a local colour to which Luke's readers all over the hellenistic world would have been sensitive. Colonnades were the most usual locale for secondary and higher education in the time of Luke. *Gymnasia* consisted, according to the architectural tradition of the period, simply of four colonnades around a square courtyard,⁵ and many philosophers besides the Stoics taught their pupils in colonnades which offered protection from

¹ A. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, I-II. I used the New York edition of 1931 (II, 742-3: 'Appendix X, On the supposed Temple Synagogue'). Earlier editions appeared from 1883¹ (London, 1886²).

² S. B. Hoenig, 'The Suppositious Temple-Synagogue', *Jewish Quarterly Review* LIV (1963), 115-31, reprinted in J. Gutmann, ed., *The Synagogue, Studies in Origins, Archaeology and Architecture* (New York, 1975), pp. 55-71.

³ P. 129 according to the pagination in *J.Q.R.*; p. 69 in Gutmann, *The Synagogue*.

⁴ E. Haenchen, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Göttingen, 1968⁶) (*Meyers Reihe*), p. 164. Luke, in fact, had no accurate ideas of the geography of Palestine as a whole and his account of Jesus' last journey to Jerusalem (ix. 51-xviii. 14) cannot be reconstructed on a map of Palestine. Luke had no such map. See H. Conzelmann, *Die Mitte der Zeit* (Tübingen, 1954, 1957²), p. 61 n. 6.

⁵ M. P. Nilsson, *Die hellenistische Schule*, pp. 30-3: 'Die Gebäude'. Nilsson refers to Vitruvius v. 11, where it is said that the *palaestrae* of *gymnasia* were surrounded on four sides by colonnades. Characteristic examples of gymnasia with colonnades are those of Priene and Pergamum.

the sun. Furthermore, a colonnade named after Solomon, who was famous for his wisdom (Luke xi. 31), must have been, for Luke, a peculiarly appropriate place for instruction.

The narrative does not indicate that Luke also pictured the scene of the twelve-year-old Jesus in a colonnade. He says only 'in the temple, among the doctors'. This reveals Luke's evident intention to make it clear that Jesus displayed his wisdom before the doctors of the temple at Jerusalem, who were regarded as authorities. There, and not in some Galilean village synagogue, was where Luke wanted Jesus to excel.¹ In an analogous way, he depicted the confrontation of Paul and the representatives of Greek philosophy as taking place in Athens. Luke sought Greek wise men in Athens, Jewish sages in Jerusalem.

The choice of the temple at Jerusalem as the scene of the episode therefore seems to serve Luke's intention to make Jesus' wisdom appear more clearly. This intention also explains why, at the beginning of the pericope, *vv.* 41-2, the celebration of the passover is accorded such attention. Luke wished Jesus to give evidence of his wisdom in Jerusalem, although he was a village boy from Nazareth in Galilee. As a good story teller, Luke knew² how to move Jesus from Nazareth to Jerusalem in a natural and historically acceptable manner, by making him travel with his parents to attend a feast of the passover, a feast of which Luke says not a word more, once it has served its purpose as an explanation of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem.

48: 'Your father and I'. The order in which Luke places the two elements of the subject is abnormal. In Greek, if ἐγώ is linked with another word to form a composite subject, usually by καί, then normally ἐγώ comes first. This is true of the New Testament also:

I Cor. ix. 6 ἐγώ καὶ Βαρναβᾶς

John viii. 16 ἐγώ καὶ ὁ πέμψας με πατήρ

John x. 30 ἐγώ καὶ ὁ πατήρ

Cf. I Cor. xv. 11 εἴτε οὖν ἐγὼ εἴτε ἐκεῖνοι

In modern commentaries no attention is paid to the striking word order in Luke ii. 48, perhaps because this order corresponds with that of modern languages in which bourgeois courtesy has relegated ἐγώ to second place. Yet Augustine noticed the unusualness of Luke's formulation.³ His explanation is that Mary followed the *ordo conjugal*, and that 'the man is the head of the woman' (Eph. v. 23). By conforming to this rule, Mary stressed her humility.

¹ Dupont, pp. 31-2: 'le voici donc dans la capitale, devant les maîtres les plus illustres de sa nation; c'est dans cette Sorbonne du judaïsme que son intelligence force l'attention, mérite l'admiration, provoque la stupeur'. Schürmann, p. 134, gives a similar interpretation.

² Cf. the way in which Luke uses the census in ii. 1 to manoeuvre Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, and the presentation in the temple (ii. 22) to set the scene for the song of Simeon.

³ Augustine, *Sermo* LI, cap. xi, no. 18, *PL*, xxxviii, 343, cited by Laurentin, *Jésus*, pp. 217-18.

However, it seems possible to give another and more mundane explanation for the primacy of ὁ πατήρ σου. In the following verse, 49, Luke makes Jesus speak the accusing words, 'Did you not know that I must be about my Father's affairs?' Plainly, the word 'Father' in 49 refers to the same word in 48 but while the word 'father' in Mary's reproach concerned Joseph, in Jesus' answer it refers to God. Luke is thus playing on the word 'father'. In this play on words 'father' has the central role. The prominent place taken by ὁ πατήρ σου in 48 clearly announces the important role which the word 'father' is to play in the direct sequel.

Yet there is not such an emphasis on 'my Father' in 49 that the opposition of the two fathers is the main theme of 48-9.¹ The stress is on 'why did you seek...? Did you not know... etc.', words which make it clear that the action of *both* parents was fundamentally misconceived. Luke does not play off one father against the other. He puts both parents in a position far beneath that of God. Luke lets the child Jesus indicate the limits to the authority and claims which his parents had over him. Thus, the evangelist aims to make it clear that Jesus was not dependent on men in his life and actions but was guided by the will of God.

49: 'I must be about the affairs of my Father'. There has been controversy over the meaning of these words for centuries. The two interpretations which have received most support are 'I must be in the house of my Father' and 'I must be about the affairs of my Father'; as a variant of the second version, one also finds 'I must be *engaged* in my Father's business'. Divers other explanations have been given. A survey of the solutions given by old and new translations, the fathers and the commentators, can be found in Laurentin.² We may confine ourselves to mentioning two views which are difficult to reconcile. B. S. Easton³ wrote that ἐν τοῖς κτλ. 'can mean only "in my Father's house"'. J. A. Scott⁴ on the other hand wrote that the same words 'can mean only "in the affairs of my Father" or "things of my Father"'.⁵

It is remarkable to note how many participants in the debate have opted very decisively for one or other extreme viewpoint. Laurentin too allowed himself to be tempted to write 'the expression εἶναι ἐν τοῖς τοῦ (followed by a personal name) never meant "to be occupied in the affairs of" and could not be understood in that sense'.⁵

It is not open to any doubt that ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρός μου δεῖ εἶναι με *can*

¹ E. Klostermann, *Lukasevangelium*, p. 47: 'Der Gegensatz von τοῦ πατρός μου zu v. 48 steht in zweiter Linie (anders 8:21).'

² R. Laurentin, *Jésus au temple* (Paris, 1966), pp. 38-72.

³ B. S. Easton, *The Gospel according to St Luke* (Edinburgh, 1928), p. 32.

⁴ J. A. Scott, *Classical Weekly* XL (1947), 70, in a review of the Revised Standard Version (New York, 1946).

⁵ Laurentin, *Jésus*, p. 56. The possibility which Laurentin wrongly dismisses here is used in the French translation of Louis Segond, and the New Translation of the Dutch Bible Society (1951).

mean 'I must be in the house of my Father'. This possibility appears from the Septuagint,¹ from papyri,² the usage of Greek authors³ and the fact that several Greek fathers naturally interpreted Luke ii. 49 in this sense, without any problems in so doing.⁴ The Syriac translations also offer 'in my Father's house'. The obvious advantage of this interpretation is that it gives a very logical sequel to the words, 'why did you seek?' The search is unnecessary, as the place where Jesus ought to be should have been evident to his parents, i.e. the house of God.

Yet it must be stressed that if Luke had only wanted to say 'I must be in my Father's house', he expressed himself in an unnatural and even extraordinary manner.

Luke's choice of words is *unnatural*, because for 'my Father's house' he could simply have written ὁ οἶκος τοῦ πατρὸς μου, just as in xvi. 27. In Luke xix. 5, he wrote ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ σου δεῖ με μείναι. With a slight variation, he could have written in ii. 49: *ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ τοῦ πατρὸς μου δεῖ με (μ)εῖναι. It cannot be objected that Luke could not have referred to the house of God as οἶκος, since he did so repeatedly:

Luke vi. 4 (// Mark ii. 26) εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ θεοῦ

Luke xix. 46 (// Mark xi. 17) ὁ οἶκός μου (sc. τοῦ θεοῦ) (cf. the cleansing of the temple in John ii. 16 τὸν οἶκον)

Acts vii. 47 Σολομὼν δὲ οἰκοδόμησεν αὐτῷ οἶκον (not a citation)

Cf. Luke xi. 51 τοῦ οἴκου for the temple-house (τοῦ ναοῦ in Matthew xxiii. 35)

Luke's expression of the idea 'to be in my Father's house' is *extraordinary* because τὰ τοῦ + genitive of a noun indicating a person never occurs in Luke or the rest of the New Testament in the sense of 'the house of'.

Mark viii. 33 'you do not think the things of God', τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ

Matthew xxii. 21 'pay Caesar what is due to Caesar', τὰ καίσαρος, 'and God what is due to God', τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ

I Cor. ii. 11 'who knows the thoughts of a man?' τὰ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου

I Cor. vii. 32 'the unmarried man cares for the Lord's business', τὰ τοῦ κυρίου

I Cor. vii. 34 *idem*

I Cor. xiii. 11 'when I grew up, I had finished with childish things', τὰ τοῦ νηπίου

In early Christian literature the expression 'the things of my Father' even occurs literally in the Gospel of Thomas, logion 61: 'To me was given from the things of my Father'.⁵

¹ Job xviii. 19; Tobit vi. 11 N; Esther vii. 9.

² J. H. Moulton, *Einleitung in die Sprache des N.T.* (Heidelberg, 1911), p. 167.

³ Laurentin, *Jésus*, pp. 58-60.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-1.

⁵ A. Guillaumont *et al.*, eds., *The Gospel according to Thomas* (Leiden/London, 1959), pp. 34-5. 'To give from': Matthew xxv. 8, Rev. iii. 9: ἐξ; Luke xx. 10: ἀπό.

αὐτῷ	πατρί	ἐξ ἧς	ἐστὶν	ἡ	πατρίων
* <i>datum-est mihi</i>		<i>ex iis qui sunt + gen.</i>			<i>mei-patris</i>
*δέδοται μοι		ἐξ (ἀπὸ?) τῶν τοῦ			πατρὸς μου

But here too, the meaning 'the house of my Father' cannot be admitted.

The words ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς μου in Luke ii. 49 can therefore mean 'in my Father's house' and as appears from the way in which the fathers understood this passage, they naturally have this meaning in the context in which they occur. As appears from analogous expressions in early Christian literature, however, Luke's phrase can also be given another and more general meaning. The question is therefore justified whether in Luke ii. 49 the interpretation 'the things of' does not make enough sense for it to be concluded that Luke deliberately chose an enigmatic expression in order to profit from its ambivalence.

This is indeed the case, for several reasons.

By using the verb δεῖ Luke makes Jesus' stay in the house of his Father a part of his ministry as a whole. This consisted, according to Luke, in the fact that Jesus *must* (δεῖ) make known the gospel of the kingdom of God (iv. 43), be rejected, be put to death and resurrected (ix. 22), and that in him the scriptures *must* (δεῖ) be fulfilled (xxii. 37). Jesus had a task to carry out in the realization of God's plans, a task which he could not lay aside. God's hand and counsel, according to Luke, had already determined what was to happen (cf. Acts iv. 28) and it was Jesus' commission to serve the putting into effect of these plans: ὑπηρετεῖν τῇ τοῦ θεοῦ βουλῇ, as Luke could have said (Acts xiii. 36). For that reason he had been sent (Luke iv. 43). Luke could have explained Jesus' stay in the temple in another way. He could for example have written, 'did you not know that I desired (ἐπιθυμῶ) to be in the temple?' or '...that I was glad to be...?' (εὐφραίνω ὧν ἐν κτλ., χαίρων εἰμι ἐν κτλ.) or '...that I wished to be in the temple?' (ἦν θέλων, ἐβουλόμην). If he had desired to indicate an obligation on Jesus' part to be in the temple, he could have written, '...that I ought to be in the temple...' (καθίκει, ἐνδέχεται) or 'that I was obliged (ὀφείλω) to be in the temple' or 'that it was necessary' (ἀναγκαῖον ἦν) etc. But by using the verb δεῖ Luke gives us to understand that Jesus' stay in the temple is to be understood as part of his inescapable task in the realization of God's plan. This task will remain upon him until the ascension.¹ As Jesus' success in the temple in ii. 46 cannot in itself be regarded as an integral part of this task, as Luke conceives it² (for this it would have been more appropriate for the doctors to reject him, see ix. 22), the words 'I must be ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς μου' have a meaning which

¹ Acts iii. 21. Luke's view that the task which Jesus had to fulfil continued after his stay in the temple cannot be derived from the fact that δεῖ is in the present tense. Even if Jesus' task had been at an end in ii. 49, Luke could have written δεῖ. Cf. xxiv. 21 ἡλπίζομεν ὅτι αὐτός ἐστιν. Blass-Debrunner, *Grammatik*, §324; A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek N.T. in the light of Historical Research* (Nashville, Tenn., 1934, reprint of the 4th edition), pp. 1029-30.

² Luke iv. 43, ix. 22, xiii. 33, xvii. 25, xxii. 37, xxiv. 7, xxiv. 26, 44-6; Acts iii. 21, xvii. 3.

transcends the incident related in the pericope. Clearly, ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς μου means not only 'in the house of my Father', but also *ἐν οἷς ὁ πατήρ μου διέθετο, that is, in the work that my Father's plan and decision imply. There is an excellent parallel to this use of τὰ in Epictetus III, xxiv. 99: διατρίβω ἐν τοῖς σοῖς, which means: 'I am living in Thy service', i.e. the service of God.

There is yet another reason why it is necessary to interpret the words ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς μου as ambivalent. Ancient readers immediately understood the text in the sense, 'I must be in the temple', but in 51 Luke allows Jesus to return to Nazareth, without the obligation just referred to forming any hindrance. This striking incongruity disappears, however, if one interprets ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς μου as *ἐν οἷς ὁ πατήρ μου διέθετο or simply *ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις τοῦ πατρὸς μου (cf. John ix. 4).¹

A third reason to accept that ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς μου is an ambivalent expression is that Luke immediately follows it with the incomprehension of Jesus' parents at their son's statement (50). This observation is a signal, by which Luke makes his readers aware that 49 has another and deeper meaning than the obvious one.² There is no reason to agree with Laurentin (*Jésus*, p. 78) that the incomprehension of Jesus' parents refers only to the play on the word 'father'. From Luke ix. 45, xviii. 34, xxiv. 25-7 and xxiv. 44-5 it is clear that failure to understand arises whenever Jesus says that he must (δεῖ) suffer, be put to death and resurrected. In agreement with this, the incomprehension of 50 cannot be confined to the altered meaning of the word 'father', but must refer to the whole statement, 'I must be in my Father's...'. What, according to Luke, Jesus' parents could not grasp, was that Jesus' words had a deeper meaning, viz. 'God has given me a special place in his providential scheme of salvation, and I cannot abandon that place'.

Fourthly, ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς μου cannot mean exclusively 'in the house of my Father', because the question 'Did you not know...?' assumes a positive answer. Joseph and Mary were expected to be aware of it. Now, within the framework of the narrative, they could not be expected to have known that their child would be in the house of God, i.e. the temple.³ What, according to Luke, they certainly could have realized, was that

¹ Laurentin, *Jésus*, p. 71, states that this conflict has been observed by various authors, and recognizes that there is a 'tension paradoxale' (p. 71) and an 'apparente contradiction' (p. 130) between 49 and 50. But in Laurentin's opinion this conflict is only illusory, because Jesus' words 'I must be with the Father' form a prophetic allusion to his resurrection and ascension. As this would not take place for another eighteen years, Jesus was not in conflict with his words in 49 when he returned to Nazareth: his hour had not yet come (John ii. 4). After all, Laurentin too attaches two meanings to the words ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς μου: (1) 'with my Father in the temple'; (2) 'with my Father in heaven after the resurrection and ascension'. In my opinion, the text of Luke ii. 41-51 offers no support for this second interpretation.

² Dupont, p. 33, speaks of 'une invitation à nous efforcer de comprendre'.

³ It is true that Luke ii. 41-52 shows a number of striking similarities to I Sam. i-iii; this has been pointed out in particular by D. Völter, *Die evangelischen Erzählungen*, pp. 76-9. But there is a significant difference. Samuel, after he had been brought to the house of the Lord (εἰς οἶκον κυρίου, i. 24), remained in the temple, attached to the temple-worship; Jesus, on the other hand, returned to

Jesus as Son of God (Luke i. 35) must be a factor in the realization of his Father's work of salvation (ii. 30).

It seems justified to conclude that Luke used an enigmatic turn of phrase¹ with two meanings. The first, which in spite of its unusual wording impresses itself on the reader of the Greek text,² is 'I must be in the house of my Father, i.e. the temple'. The second is 'I must³ be about my Father's business'.

The business of the Father included, for example, the proclamation of the kingdom of God (iv. 43), the giving of the Holy Spirit (Acts ii. 33) and of the kingdom (Luke xii. 32), the fulfilment of his Father's promise⁴ (xxiv. 49): all acts of God which Jesus helped to carry out. Just as εἶναι ἐν ὑμνοῖς (Jos. *Ant.* 11, 346) is correctly translated as 'to occupy oneself in the singing of hymns', so εἶναι ἐν in Luke ii. 49 can be translated, without any objection, as 'to be occupied in' as also I Tim. iv. 15, ἐν ταύτοις ἴσθι, 'occupy yourself with these things'. Laurentin⁴ erred in rejecting this translation on the grounds that it is only permissible in cases in which the object introduced by ἐν refers to some activity. He thus failed to see that the 'things' of God can be interpreted without any difficulty as activities, as ἔργα, as God's 'great and marvellous deeds'.

The ambivalence of the sentence ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς μου δεῖ με εἶναι is probably not susceptible of a satisfactory rendering in any language.⁵ The translator is therefore faced with the problem of which of the two meanings he is to choose. The least inadequate solution is to give one version in the text, and refer in a note to the deliberate ambivalence and the alternative meaning. Several translations⁶ give a footnote at ii. 49, to indicate that another translation is possible. This, however, is not enough. Attention has to be drawn to the fact that both translations correspond to Luke's intention. If no note can be given, 'I must concern myself with the things of my Father' should be preferred, as the intention which it expresses could not adequately

Nazareth after the presentation (Luke ii. 39) and continued to live with his parents. For that reason it could not be expected that they would know that he *must* be in the temple.

¹ Dupont, p. 34: 'la parole énigmatique'; Laurentin, *Structure*, p. 143: 'phrase énigmatique'; *Jésus*, p. 72: 'in the house of my Father' is an expression of 'caractère volontairement énigmatique'.

² This appears to be a conclusion which can be justified from the Greek fathers (see Laurentin, *Jésus*, pp. 59-61), *pace* C. F. D. Moule's observation, 'a priori the Authorised Version about my Father's business seems the more natural', *An Idiom book of N.T. Greek* (Cambridge, 1968²), p. 75.

³ The word δεῖ is ambivalent too, as it can represent a present tense as well as an imperfect in *oratio recta*, cf. p. 333 n. 1.

⁴ Laurentin, *Jésus*, p. 54. For the meaning 'to be engaged in', see Soph. *Oed. Tyr.* 562 ἐν τῇ τέχνῃ; Plat. *Phaedo* 59A ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ (Liddell and Scott, p. 488), *Prot.* 317C and *Meno* 91E ἐν τῇ τέχνῃ; Thuc. viii, 14 ἐν τεχνισμῷ καὶ παρασκευῇ; Xen. *Hell.* iv, viii. 7 ἐν τοιοῦτοις; Plut. *Mor.* ii, 342B ἐν τοῖς κυριωτέτοις τῆς ἡγεμονίας; Aelian, *V.H.* 1, 31 ἐν γεωργίᾳ. Cf. F. Field, *Notes on the Translation of the N.T.* (Cambridge, 1899), p. 52.

⁵ The Latin translations are also unsatisfactory, either because literalness makes them obscure (*ff² l q r¹*: 'in patris mei'), or because they give only one of the two meanings (β: 'in patris mei domum'; *aur e d f v g*: 'in his quae patris mei sunt'), or neither of them (*b*: 'in propria patris mei').

⁶ E.g. *A Harmony of the Evangelists in English, with . . . notes for the use of the Unlearned*, by J. Priestley (London, 1780), p. 16; the Dutch Willibrord version, the Gospel of Luke in contemporary Dutch, *Vrij!* (Amsterdam, 1970), the *Bible de Jérusalem*, and the *Version synodale de la société biblique de France*.

be grasped by a reader who saw only 'I must be in my Father's house'. The converse would be less difficult.

Finally, it is not difficult to show that the interpretation which R. Laurentin, following in the footsteps of Dupont, gives to the words 'I must be ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς μου' seems unacceptable. According to Laurentin, ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς μου can mean only 'with my Father' and nothing else. Jesus would have said, 'I must be with my Father', meaning by this, 'I must come by suffering and resurrection to share the glory of my Father in heaven'. Jesus' words in ii. 49 would thus have been a mysterious prediction of his resurrection and exaltation. Laurentin draws this conclusion from the fact that the verb δεῖ is used, which in his opinion is 'l'expression-clé pour signifier le mystère pascal'. The answer to this is that Luke did repeatedly use the verb δεῖ in Jesus' predictions of his passion and resurrection, but he also employed it to mean that Jesus *must* preach the kingdom of God (iv. 43, a passage not cited by Laurentin), or that certain events *must* come about before the end of the world begins (xxi. 9, also omitted by Laurentin). Luke thus did not use the verb exclusively to indicate that it was God's will that Jesus should suffer, die and be resurrected. Jesus' whole life, his preaching (iv. 43), his actions (xix. 5) and his journey to Jerusalem (xiii. 33) are dominated by this δεῖ. It is also as inescapable a part of God's will that a time will come when all things shall be set up again (Acts iii. 21), that Paul should suffer for Christ's name (xiv. 22), go to Rome (xix. 21) and there bear witness to his faith (xxiii. 11). 'The deliberate will and plan' (ii. 23) of God, the source of the δεῖ in question, concern a far wider field than the passion and exaltation of Jesus. It is therefore not necessary to interpret Luke ii. 49 as foreshadowing this exaltation, unless other reasons compel us to do so.

Laurentin in fact names several other elements¹ in the pericope which he regards as indications that Jesus' stay in the temple was a mysterious sign of his future exaltation, even a first Easter, and that his expression in ii. 49 was a foreshadowing of Easter. But these references are just as unconvincing. The explicit reference to the feast of the passover in 41-2 serves to explain how Jesus came to be in Jerusalem, and not to give the whole episode a paschal significance. Jerusalem and the temple (43, 46) are relevant here as the places where Jesus could meet the best and wisest teachers, not as the locale of the events of the passion. The reference to 'three days' in 46 has, as explained above, demonstrably nothing to do with the resurrection, contrary to Laurentin's opinion. Jesus met incomprehension (50) elsewhere in the Gospel, in fact whenever he spoke of his passion and resurrection, but in these cases his speech was always completely explicit, whereas in ii. 49 there is not the slightest allusion to death or resurrection. Moreover, the incomprehension in 50 is readily explicable as the normal reaction (from Luke's viewpoint) of those who understood Jesus' words in the obvious local sense.

¹ Laurentin, *Jesus*, pp. 95-109.

It cannot be denied that Laurentin's exposition is of great subtlety and depth. It stands in the impressive allegorical tradition of Clement and Origen, but in its soaring flight it leaves the text and its factual details, and thus the original meaning intended by the author, rather far behind.¹

II. THE STRUCTURE OF THE NARRATIVE

The structure of the pericope has received little – indeed I believe no – attention in the literature. Yet a study of this structure can throw light on the narrative technique and intention of the evangelist.

First of all, the limits of the pericope must be exactly defined.

It is clear that the pericope begins with 41, 'and his parents went every year to Jerusalem...'. The preceding verse, 40, is a typical 'summary'. Though it functions as editorial introduction to 41 ff., it is not a part of the episode. It is even very possible that 40, like i. 80, is intended in the first instance to round off the preceding passage. Yet 41 ff. stand in such a clear relationship to the topic of wisdom raised in 40 that it is certain that, in the composition as it now exists, 40 is not only a conclusion but also a transition to 41 ff. The narrative proper, however, begins in 41. Accordingly, 40 was omitted by the author of the Greek Gospel of Thomas, who in his account of the twelve-year-old Jesus made demonstrable use of Luke's Gospel, as we now know it. He regarded this verse as not belonging in the actual narrative.

The end of the pericope is formed by 51*a*, 'and he obeyed them'. In the first place 'he returned' (κατέβη, 51*a*) functions as the stereotyped exit by which episodes are repeatedly closed in Luke i–ii and elsewhere (i. 23 and i. 38 ἀπήλθεν, i. 56 ὑπέστρεψεν, ii. 20 ὑπέστρεψαν, ii. 39 ἐπέστρεψαν). Secondly, 'all things' (πάντα τὰ ῥήματα) cannot refer to Jesus' words in 49, for these are already referred to as 'the word that he spoke' (τὸ ῥῆμα ὃ ἐλάλησεν) in 50; 51*b*, 'and his mother treasured up all these things in her heart' clearly begins the conclusion of the childhood episodes. Thirdly, Luke did not write in 51 'all these things' but, according to the *lectio difficilior potior*, 'all things', without 'these'. Unlike ii. 19, he did not use the demonstrative ταῦτα, and this makes the connection between 51*a* and 51*b* much less

¹ I feel obliged to correct two mistakes of another sort in Laurentin's work. (i) On p. 51 he cites from a nineteenth-century commentary the name of a scholar called Valcken, who is said to have interpreted τὰ τοῦ πατρὸς as 'affairs'. Laurentin adds that he had not been able to see Valcken's work himself. He apparently failed to realize that Valcken was an abbreviation of L. C. Valckenaer, professor of Greek at Leiden from 1765 to 1785, who was a good scholar in the fields of textual criticism, language and interpretation of the New Testament. His notes on Luke ii. 41–51 occur in his *Selecta e Scholis* (ed. E. Wassenbergh), I. (Amstelodami, 1815). (ii) On p. 156 Laurentin includes, among the authors who have compared Luke ii. 41–51 with a legend of the Buddha, two scholars, Van den Bergh and Van Ensinga (*sic*), their names being separated by a comma, and listed separately in the index. In reality, these scholars were one and the same person, i.e. G. A. van den Bergh van Eysinga (*sic*), professor of New Testament at the University of Amsterdam from 1936 until 1944. He wrote, as well as hundreds of reviews, about 200 books, brochures and articles including several in French. With P. L. Couchoud of Paris, he also edited the *Annales d'histoire du Christianisme*.

close than that between ii. 18 and ii. 19. Fourthly, the author of the Greek Gospel of Thomas used Luke ii. 51*b*–52 as the last paragraph of his whole book (xix. 5). He makes his action clearer by writing πάντα τὰ γενόμενα instead of πάντα τὰ ῥήματα. He thus regarded Luke ii. 51*b*–52 as a conclusion not of the preceding pericope but of the whole childhood narrative. The same view has been rightly upheld in modern times, by, for example, F. Neiryneck,¹ B. van Iersel,² B. F. Meyer³ and H. Schürmann.⁴ Not a single edition of the Greek text, or – so far as I am aware – of any translation, reflects the correctness of this insight in its layout.

The words κατέβη μετ' αὐτῶν in 51*a* have a literal pendant in 42, ἀναβαίνοντων αὐτῶν. The verses 42 (prepared for by the 'background information' in 41) and 51*a* form as it were the acts in which the dramatis personae enter and leave the stage.

The passage reaches a climax in the section which describes Jesus sitting among the doctors, in conversation with them. Luke very deliberately threw this into relief. On the one hand, he left his readers on tenterhooks, eager and anxious to learn the fate of the missing child (he does not say in 43 that Jesus was in the temple, only that he remained in Jerusalem, and not until 46 does he make it clear, when he relates how Jesus was found by his parents). On the other hand, Luke drew particular attention to Jesus' sitting among the doctors, by emphasizing the amazement of those present, and the astonishment of his parents.

Luke focuses alternately on Jesus and his parents, both before and after the central passage, *in medio doctorum*.⁵ Before this phrase the emphasis falls first on Jesus, who remains behind in Jerusalem (43), then on his parents who search for him (44–46*a*). After the central phrase, in chiasmic order, first the parents with their feelings of astonishment and reproach receive attention, and then Jesus with his answer and their incomprehension (49–50).

The structure of the pericope can be set out schematically as shown on the next page.

Just as the *parodos* of 42 is preceded by a glance into the past (Mary and Joseph were accustomed to go every year to Jerusalem), so the *exodos* of 51 is followed by a look into the future – Jesus was from then on an obedient son.

¹ F. Neiryneck, 'Maria bewaarde al de woorden in haar hart', *Collationes Brugenses et Gandavenses v* (1959), 433–66, see p. 463.

² B. van Iersel, 'The Finding of Jesus in the Temple', *N.T.* iv (1960), 161–73, see p. 162.

³ B. F. Meyer, 'But Mary kept all these things, Lc 2, 19, 51', *C.B.Q.* xxvi (1964), 31–49.

⁴ The exegetes who see 51*b* as the conclusion of 41 ff. include W. C. van Unnik, 'Die rechte Bedeutung des Wortes treffen, Lukas 2, 19', in *Verbum, Essays... dedicated to Dr H. W. Obbink* (Utrecht, 1964), pp. 129–47, see p. 131, n. 3: 'Dieser Passus steht als Abschluss der Geschichte vom zwölfjährigen Jesus im Tempel.'

⁵ The pericope contains 170 words. The word μέσση in 46 is the 85th word and the phrase ἐν μέσση τῶν διδασκάλων therefore forms the mathematical centre of the pericope. In the scheme of the structure of the pericope, which we give in the text, another mathematical balance is concealed, to which Professor Smit Sibinga drew my attention: A + B + B' + A' = C + C' + X = 85 words.

- A. *Parodos*: Mary, Joseph and Jesus go to Jerusalem (ἀναβαίνόντων, 41-2);
 B. Jesus stays in Jerusalem, which is not noticed (43);
 C. his parents seek and find him (44-6a);
 X. Jesus among the doctors (46b-47);
 C'. his parents, annoyed, reproach him (48);
 B'. Jesus' reaction, which is not understood (49-50);
 A'. *Exodos*: Jesus, Mary and Joseph return to Nazareth (κατέβη, 51a).

The structure of the pericope appears to be a textbook case of 'concentric symmetry'.¹ In itself, this is perhaps not surprising. Concentric symmetry was, as appears from a rapidly growing series of modern publications,² a very widespread method of composition, both in Hebrew and in Greek and Latin literature. It is evident in the psalms, the prophets and other parts of the Old Testament; in Homer, Hesiod, Herodotus, Plato, the tragedians, Virgil, Catullus and in various early Christian writers, both in the New Testament and elsewhere, including Paul, Mark, Luke, John and Hebrews. Of more importance in this connection is the fact that the study of concentric symmetry has clearly revealed that those authors who employed it used the central phrase to draw special attention to that which they considered particularly important.³ The central phrase also functioned as climax. We are justified in concluding that Luke ii. 41-51 has its climax, or at least one of its climaxes, in the encounter of Jesus and the doctors, which Luke employs to illustrate Jesus' intelligence. The structure of the narrative indicates that Luke intended to represent Jesus as a precociously intelligent child. The assertion that 'the narrative finds its key in v. 49'⁴ therefore needs qualification, in view of the form in which Luke chose to cast his narrative.

III. THE MOTIF OF THE PRECOCIOUSLY INTELLIGENT CHILD

Luke ii. 41-51 sought to depict Jesus as precociously intelligent. This conclusion can be drawn both from the shape of the narrative and from its introduction. Verse 40, 'the child grew big and strong and full of wisdom', belongs to the editorial transition from the scene of the presentation to that of the twelve-year-old Jesus. The direct parallel to ii. 40 in the pericopes on John

¹ For the term 'concentric symmetry', see A. Vanhoye, *La structure littéraire de l'Épître aux Hébreux* (Paris/Bruges 1963), p. 62.

² Older literature is listed by Vanhoye, *La structure*, pp. 60-3. It is not possible to give even a survey of the voluminous recent literature. We may content ourselves with a reference to J. Smit Sibinga, 'Melito of Sardis. The Artist and his Text', *Vig. chr.* xxiv (1970), 81-104, see p. 104, n. 59; X. Léon-Dufour, 'Trois chiasmes johanniques', *N.T.S.* vii (1960-61), 249-55; and A. di Marco, 'Der Chiasmus in der Bibel, 3. Teil', *Linguistica biblica* xxxix (December 1976), 37-85 (especially on the gospels).

³ Vanhoye, *La structure*, p. 60; K. A. Bailey, 'Recovering the Poetic Structure of I Cor. i 17-ii 12', *N.T.* xvii (1975), 265-96, see p. 270: 'the climax of a poem of this [concentro-symmetric] type is always the centre'.

⁴ J. F. Jansen, 'Luke ii, 41-52', *Interpretation, a Journal of Bible and Theology* xxx (1976), 400-4, see p. 401.

the Baptist is i. 80, 'the child grew up and he became strong in spirit'. While John grew 'in spirit' Jesus grew 'in wisdom'. This difference can be related to the fact that Luke wanted to give the first evidence of the role of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' life – and a very pronounced role too – in the scene of the baptism (iii. 22), in agreement with Mark i. 10. In order not to belittle that role, Luke may have wished to play down its importance in Jesus' earlier life before ch. iii, and therefore omitted it in ii. 40. But perhaps he was not even tempted to speak of the Holy Spirit in ii. 40 (that he wrote i. 80 before ii. 40 cannot be proved), and wanted to refer specifically to Jesus' wisdom here; ii. 40 also contains a clear statement of the theme with which, according to Luke, ii. 41–51 is to be concerned: Jesus' wisdom.

It is not difficult to establish the convention to which Luke adhered when he related that his main character gave evidence of amazing intelligence while still a child. It was a standard motif in Graeco-Roman biography. Several authors, including Bultmann¹ in particular, have remarked on the parallel. For Bultmann it was so evident that the story of the twelve-year-old Jesus reflected a biographical interest² that he produced no proof of this view, but confined himself to a few citations from Herodotus (I, 114), Plutarch (*V. Alex.* v) and Philostratus (*V. Ap.* I, vii). Laurentin³ believed he could dismiss the parallel between Luke ii. 41–51 and the Greek biographical tradition as of minor importance, by discussing the three passages cited by Bultmann. It seems as if Laurentin believed that these three texts are the only ones in Greek literature in which great figures from history and literature are said to have excelled in wisdom or intelligence in youth. In any case, Laurentin regards a discussion of Bultmann's three references as an adequate basis on which to conclude that the contrasts with the Greek biographical tradition are 'much more striking than the similarities', so that he can calmly assert that 'Quoique Luc possède une culture hellénique très supérieure à celle des autres évangélistes, il s'insère avant tout dans la tradition biblique.'

However, the tradition of the 'hero' who even as a child gave signs of impressive intelligence is much more widespread and more stereotyped in Greek and hellenistic biography than one might assume from the literature which has appeared on Luke ii. 41–51 up to now. Xenophon relates that Cyrus as a child excelled his contemporaries in the speed with which he learned (*Cyrop.* I, iii. 1) and gave frequent evidence of his eagerness to learn (iv. 3). The unusual intelligence of the young Epicurus was described by his biographers Ariston of Ceos and Heraclides Lembus, as mentioned above. According to Plutarch, Solon was already a 'lover of wisdom' (σοφίας ἐραστής, *V. Sol.* 11) when he was still young (νέος ὦν ἔτι). Theseus

¹ R. Bultmann, *Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* (Göttingen, 1958⁴), p. 327.

² *Ibid.* p. 334: '... das Interesse an seinem βίος ...'.

³ R. Laurentin, *Jésus*, p. 147–51. Laurentin substitutes Plutarch's *Oratio de Alexandri Magni fortuna et virtute*, *Mor.* II, 342B, for *Plut. Alex.* v.

displayed as a boy (μειράκιον) a firm spirit united with intelligence and sagacity (σύνεσις, *V. Thes.* vi, 4). Themistocles, when still a child (ἔτι παῖς ὦν), was naturally intelligent (συνετός, *V. Them.* ii, 1). The young (νέος) Dion was Plato's quickest-learning and most acute pupil (εὐμαθέστατος καὶ ὀξύτατος, *V. Dion.* iv, 2). Cicero's intelligence (σύνεσις) was such that people came to admire him, causing scenes comparable in certain respects to that of Jesus in the temple: 'When he (Cicero) was of an age for taking lessons, his natural talent shone out clearly, and he won name and fame among the boys, so that their fathers used to visit the schools in order to see Cicero with their own eyes and observe the acuteness (ὀξύτης) and intelligence (σύνεσις) in his studies for which he was extolled' (*V. Cic.* ii, 2). In the pseudo-Herodotean *Vita Homeri*¹ the teacher, Phemios, states that Homer as a child was intelligent (τὸν παῖδα ὄντα συνετόν). The *Vita Aeschinis* preserves a tradition that Aeschines as a child assisted his father, a schoolmaster, in school (φασὶ δὲ αὐτὸν παῖδα μὲν ὄντα ἐν τῷ διδασκαλείῳ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑπουργεῖν).² According to Nepos, Epaminondas as an adolescent excelled his fellow pupils *in doctrinis* (*V. Epam.* ii, 2) and Atticus as *puer* was so gifted that he not only learned rapidly but could repeat what he had learned (*non solum celeriter acciperet quae tradebantur sed etiam excellenter pronuntiaret*, *V. Att.* i, 2-3).

In conformity with this biographical convention, Philo too, in his *Vita Mosis* i, v. 21-4, claims that his hero, in his childhood (τῆς παιδικῆς ἡλικίας, 25), excelled in intelligence, knowledge and wisdom. Josephus (*Ant.* ii, ix. 6) says that Moses as a child revealed an intelligence beyond his years, equal to that of an older man. The fact that the motif of precocious intelligence in children who were later to become famous had taken root in Jewry as early as the first century B.C. appears from *Jubilees* xi. 16, according to which Abraham had already reached the conclusion that idolatry and iconolatry were serious errors, before he was fourteen. The theme does not appear in biographical inscriptions of hellenistic Egypt;³ the myth of Si Osire which forms a striking parallel to Luke ii. 41-51 (see, e.g., Bultmann, *Geschichte*, p. 328) seems to reflect the same literary tradition, but may well have been influenced by Greek biography, if not by Luke ii itself.

It is not necessary to cite further passages.⁴ It was a commonplace of hellenistic biography to relate tales of the precocious intelligence shown by famous men. The common occurrence of this motif forbids us to assume that its use in Luke ii. 41-51 is independent of this biographical tradition. Not

¹ Ps.-Herodotus, *Vita Homeri* (ed. Wilamowitz-Moellendorf) (*Kleine Texte* cxxxvii), iv-v.

² *Vita Aeschinis*, in F. Franke (ed.), *Aeschinis Orationes* (Lipsiae, 1851) (Teubner), pp. 1-2.

³ E. Otto, *Die biographischen Inschriften der Ägyptischen Spätzeit* (Leiden, 1954). On the theme of *intelligentia precox* in Jewish sources, see Ch. Perrot, 'Les récits d'enfance dans la haggada antérieure au II^e siècle de notre ère', *Rech. de sc. rel.* lv (1967), 481-518; see p. 484 (on Noah), p. 486 (on Abraham), p. 503 (on Moses).

⁴ See also *Vita Alexandri* i, xvi (ed. H. van Thiel); L. Bieler, *Theios Aner* (Darmstadt, 1967, reprint of the Wien edition, 1935, vol. 1), p. 34.

that this pericope must be directly influenced by any of the examples quoted, but it is sufficiently clear that it was a favourite theme of hellenistic biographies of famous people, to claim that even as children they had excelled in intelligence. The pericope follows a general tendency.

A relationship between the first chapters of Luke's Gospel and Greek biography was also affirmed in 1973 by W. C. van Unnik,¹ who believed that Luke's narrative followed the scheme (1) birth, (2) first education at home, (3) schooldays (γένεσις, ἀνατροφή, παιδεία), known from Acts xxii. 3. As Jesus' upbringing in Nazareth is only briefly alluded to in Luke iv. 16, Van Unnik has to place the story of the twelve-year-old Jesus alongside the circumstances of his birth. In my opinion this is a rather forced interpretation and, moreover, the third element in the scheme is completely absent in Luke.

Van Unnik was right to see the correspondence between Luke ii. 41-51 and Greek biographical convention, but the convention was *not* a narrative of the birth of the hero and its attendant circumstances, but the motif of the unusual intelligence of the person in question, revealed when he was still a child.

It is perhaps useful to outline briefly the significance of the fact that Luke ii. 41-51 betrays the influence of the literary tradition of Greek biography. This is not to say that the pericope tries to achieve a historical reconstruction in any modern sense of the word. Ancient biographies, in general, were written either to make someone famous or to reveal the causes of that fame in the case of those who had already achieved it. In both cases, the author tried to arouse respect or admiration for his subject. So too did Luke in ii. 41-51. Both author and readers know, and honour, the subject *a priori*. The pericope tries to present reasons which justify that honour.

IV. THE REDACTIONAL CHARACTER OF 47

However striking the place of Jesus' intelligence in the pericope, explicit reference to it is limited to one sentence, i.e. 47. If 47 were missing, the reader would learn nothing of Jesus' intelligence, or of the deep impression which he made on his audience. This very verse, 47, has been suspected of coming from the hand of a redactor. Van Iersel² pointed out two irregularities in the narrative as it exists.

Firstly, because the sentence καὶ ἰδόντες αὐτὸν ἐξεπλάγησαν in 48 has no subject, the incautious reader is tempted to supply the subject from 47 (πάντες οἱ ἀκούοντες αὐτοῦ) and to fall into the assumption that πάντες is also the subject of ἐξεπλάγησαν. This is naturally not the correct interpreta-

¹ W. C. van Unnik, 'Éléments artistiques dans l'Évangile de Luc', in F. Neiryneck (ed.), *L'Évangile de Luc. Problèmes littéraires et théologiques* (Gembloux, 1973) (*Biblioth. Ephém. Théol. Lov.* xxxii), pp. 129-40, see pp. 136-7.

² B. van Iersel, 'The Finding of Jesus in the Temple', *N.T.* iv (1960), 161-73.

tion. The reader is assumed to take as subject the $\gamma\omicron\nu\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ who have been the subject from 43*b* to 46, without interruption, but are no longer so in 47. The variation of subject in 47 is the reason why 48*a* is elliptical and liable to misunderstanding.

In the second place, in 46 Jesus is said to be listening and asking questions. In 47, however, one is amazed, not at his questions, but at his answers, which have not been mentioned. Van Iersel concludes: 'It follows that 47 is to be regarded as a secondary addition to the story.'

Schürmann¹ agrees with Van Iersel that 47 betrays the hand of a redactor, but does not accept that in the version of the narrative which preceded the Lucan redaction every equivalent of 47 was lacking. He bases this view on two arguments. On the one hand, the observation in 46 on Jesus sitting in the midst of the doctors, and his questions, which according to Schürmann must already represent an allusion to Jesus' wisdom, would remain unilluminated. On the other hand, if 47 was completely absent, the motif of Jesus' wisdom would be totally lacking, and there would be no occasion to add the pericope to 40, in which Jesus' σοφία is mentioned.

These assertions will not bear examination. Firstly it is completely unnecessary to suppose that in a version in which 47 was lacking 46 would already have alluded to Jesus' wisdom. In a narrative which wished to depict the young Jesus as already devoting himself to the affairs of God, it makes perfect sense in itself that on a particular occasion he went his own way, was believed to be lost, and was found sitting among the doctors and putting questions to them.² In such a narrative it was not at all necessary for Jesus to be presented as exceptionally intelligent.³

Secondly, 40, in which the word σοφία looks forward to the σύνεσις in 47, is itself part of the redactional transition from ii. 28-38 to ii. 41-51. Nothing forbids us accepting that the redactor who inserted 47 at the same time created the coherence which can be observed between 40 and 47. Not only the word σοφία, but all the rest of 40 (χάρις θεοῦ ἦν ἐπ' αὐτό) also seems to be due to Luke's redaction. Χάρις belongs to what Hawkins described as 'the most distinctive and important instances' among the words characteristic of Luke's gospel.⁴ The phrase χάρις ἦν ἐπ' αὐτό has only one exact parallel in the entire Greek Bible, i.e. in Acts iv. 33, χάρις μεγάλη ἦν ἐπὶ πάντας. (These sentences are formed by analogy with those in which the Spirit is said to be 'upon' someone: Luke ii. 25 πνεῦμα ἦν ἅγιον ἐπ' αὐτόν, cf. Luke iv. 18 = Isa. lxi. 1, πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ' ἐμέ.)

¹ H. Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 1 (Freiburg/Basel/Wien, 1969), 135.

² Such a story is told, for example, of Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanos, who ran away from his father to devote himself to the study of the Law, and was found by his father, who had come to Jerusalem, in a 'house of study'. See R. Bultmann, *Geschichte*, p. 328.

³ The verb ἐξίσταμαι characterizes astonishment at supernatural happenings such as the raising of Jairus' daughter (Luke viii. 56), the resurrection of Jesus (Luke xxiv. 22), the magical arts of Simon the Magician (Acts viii. 9, 11), Philip's miracles (13), the miracle of the tongues at Pentecost (Acts ii. 7, 12).

⁴ J. C. Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae* (Oxford, 1909², reprinted 1968), p. 23.

Consequently, the arguments by which Schürmann tried to justify his belief that the pre-Lucan version of ii. 41-51 included some equivalent or other of 47 are not convincing. Yet on the other hand there is no adequate basis to support the conclusion that 47 is entirely an interpolation of Luke, without any foundation in the preceding tradition. The vocabulary and style of the verse are, as will be demonstrated below, extremely Lucan in character, but this in no way excludes the possibility that 47 is a Lucan adaptation of a passage which already displayed the irregularities pointed out by Van Iersel. It is in principle impossible to discover whether a passage which forms part of a narrative, and is clearly redactional in character, rests on an older basis, unless the source is known. It would contribute to the solution of the dilemma if it were beyond dispute that 47 also reflected typical Lucan interest in its content, but this is not the case. True, Luke did sometimes add to Mark's narrative that Jesus' audience were astonished by his words or actions (Luke ix. 43*b*, xxiv. 12), but more often he omitted Mark's reference to their amazement (Mark v. 20, x. 24, 26, x. 32, xi. 18; cf. xv. 5, 44). The conclusion therefore remains that there is no way of determining whether Luke in 47 adapted an older passage, or created and interpolated the verse *e nihilo*.

On the other hand it is perfectly clear that 47 in its present form shows the language and style of Luke as redactor. The first five words of the verse, ἐξίσταντο δὲ πάντες οἱ ἀκούοντες, occur (as no previous author known to me has pointed out) in identical form in Acts ix. 21, a passage not based on older tradition.¹ The second half of the verse, τῇ συνέσει καὶ τοῖς ἀποκρίσεσιν αὐτοῦ, forms a hendiadys² for which the best parallel is to be found in Luke xxi. 15, στόμα καὶ σοφία³, a redactional addition to the text of Mark xiii. 11.

Although ἐξίστημι only occurs three times in the third Gospel, once taken from Mark v. 42, and twice as *Sondergut* of Luke, it seems from the eight cases in which it occurs in Acts that Luke used it readily enough.

The phrase πάντες οἱ ἀκούοντες (-σαντες) is decidedly characteristic of Luke. It is admittedly found only three times in his Gospel, but it occurs eight times in Luke and Acts taken together, while not occurring at all in either Matthew or Mark, or in the rest of the New Testament:

Luke i.	66	πάντες οἱ	ἀκούσαντες
ii.	18	πάντες οἱ	ἀκούσαντες
ii.	47	πάντες οἱ	ἀκούοντες

¹ H. Conzelmann, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Tübingen, 1963) (*Handbuch zum N.T.*), p. 59. Cf. also Acts ii. 12.

² Blass-Debrunner, *Grammatik* §442, 16.

³ Fr. Lucas Brugensis (cf. p. 324, n. 1) paraphrased *os et sapientiam* as *sermonem sapientem*. Modern translations, such as *The Gospel of Luke in Contemporary Dutch, Vrij!* (Amsterdam, 1970) or the *New Testament in Today's Dutch, Groot Nieuws voor U* (Amsterdam/Boxtel, 1972) have 'wijze woorden' (wise words). The first translates 'I shall have you say such wise words that...' and the second, 'I shall put such wise words into your mouth that...'

Acts v.	5	πάντας τοὺς ἀκούοντας
v.	11	πάντας τοὺς ἀκούοντας
ix.	21	πάντες οἱ ἀκούοντες
x.	44	πάντας τοὺς ἀκούοντας
xxvi.	29	πάντας τοὺς ἀκούοντας

This phrase could rightly claim to be included in Hawkins' Subsidiary List B¹ from which it is wrongly omitted. Cadbury pointed out that in details Luke inclines to generalization. Πᾶς and πάντες are favourite words of his, and are sometimes added to his sources, as may be seen from the lists drawn up by Cadbury.²

Finally, it may be observed that the way in which 47 is linked to 46, i.e. by the coordinating conjunction δέ, is in exact agreement with Luke's preference for δέ over καί.³

The present form of 47 has therefore been strongly influenced by Luke. This is not to say that the verse was first composed and interpolated by him. He could have adapted some earlier form of the verse, but even if the Lucan redaction were founded on an earlier version, the irregularities which, as Van Iersel pointed out, the verse introduces into the narrative are sufficient grounds to accept that it was interpolated at some stage of transmission. That may have happened at Luke's redaction, or earlier; in either case the verse is secondary. A pre-Lucan recension of the narrative was made, in which 47 had no part, and in which the motif of Jesus' intelligence was not included. G. Huet wrote in 1912, in a completely different context, 'Le thème de l'enfant sage a été parfois ajouté après coup à des récits où ce thème primitivement ne se trouvait pas.'⁴

V. LUKE'S REDACTION IN THE REST OF THE PERICOPE

Luke's redaction is not confined to 47: the pericope shows his idiom elsewhere. We shall survey the other verses in rather less detail than 47.

In Luke's narrative the journey to Jerusalem (42) and the annual pilgrimage of Jesus' parents serve the purpose of bringing Jesus into contact with the best qualified teachers of Palestine. They are subsidiary to, and prepare for, 47. It is therefore not surprising that 41 and 42 are highly Lucan in language.

Πορεύεσθαι is editorial in twenty of the forty-nine cases where it is used by Luke. It repeatedly recurs in introductions to pericopes which the evangelist himself composed (ix. 51, x. 38, xvii. 11). Although it cannot be called a

¹ Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae*, pp. 28-9; cf. F. Neiryneck, 'Hawkins's Additional Notes to his "Horae Synopticae"', *Eph. Theol. Lov.* XLVI (1970), 78-111, see p. 86 where the expression is not mentioned.

² H. J. Cadbury, *The Style and Literary Method of Luke* (2 vols. Cambridge, Mass., 1919-20), II, 115-16.

³ Cadbury, pp. 142-5; Van Iersel, p. 171.

⁴ G. Huet, 'Daniel et Susanne', *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 33me année, LXV (1912), 277-84.

'favourite word' of Luke, it is in a number of cases 'clearly due to him rather than to his source'.¹ Γονεῖς is characteristic of Luke's Gospel according to Hawkins' strictest standards: Luke changes 'father and (or) mother' to 'parents' in viii. 56 and xviii. 29, and in xxi. 16 it is a Lucan addition. Κατά *distributivum* is a grammatical peculiarity of Luke in temporal phrases.² Ἔτος figures in Hawkins' first list of Luke's characteristics. Ἰερουσαλήμ is a particularly distinctive Lucanism.³ In the expression τῇ ἑορτῇ τοῦ πάσχα the element τῇ ἑορτῇ is perhaps a Lucan attempt to soften the barbarian sound of the indeclinable Aramaic word πάσχα. Luke is known for his 'repugnance to foreign words'⁴ and for example changed τὸ πάσχα καὶ τὰ ἄζυμα in Mark xiv. 1 to ἡ ἑορτὴ τῶν ἄζύμων ἢ λεγομένη πάσχα in Luke xxii. 1.

In 42, one meets again the words just named: ἔτος and ἑορτή, this time avoiding the barbarism completely. Again, ἔθος is a Lucan characteristic in so far as it occurs ten times in Luke and Acts, and never in Matthew, Mark, Paul, or John (κατὰ τὸ ἔθος is redactional in Luke xxii. 39). Furthermore, the order of noun and numeral in ἐτῶν δώδεκα is in agreement with Luke's tendency to improve the semitic word order of his sources into the normal Greek.⁵

Verse 43 contains the typical Lucan turn of phrase, ἐν τῷ + infinitive,⁶ and the verb ὑποστρέφειν,⁷ also characteristic of Luke, as well as the Lucanisms γονεῖς and Ἰερουσαλήμ, which have just been referred to.

Συγγενεὺς and γνωστός, used by Luke in 44, both occur in Hawkins' lists.⁸ Verse 45 also includes Ἰερουσαλήμ and ὑποστρέφειν, for which Luke had a pronounced preference.

Very characteristic of Lucan style is the phrase ἐγένετο followed by a finite verb,⁹ as in 46. The order of noun and numeral in ἡμέρας τρεῖς also conforms with Luke's preferences.¹⁰ Adverbial expressions derived from μέσος, like ἐν μέσῳ in ii. 46, are favourites with Luke.¹¹ Though between ἐπερωτάω and the simple verb Luke prefers the simple verb,¹² he changed ἡρώτων in Mark iv. 10 into ἐπηρώτων in Luke viii. 9 and introduced the compound verb in Luke vi. 9, xviii. 40, xx. 21 and xxii. 64, so that the use of ἐπερωτῶντα in ii. 46 does not clash with his normal idiom.

¹ Cadbury, p. 110; cf. pp. 173 and 177.

² *Ibid.* p. 117.

³ Hawkins, p. 19. The word has an asterisk which marks it as a most distinctive and important Lucanism. For 'l'importance accordée à Jérusalem, thème favori de Luc', see Laurentin, *Structure*, p. 103, and *Jésus*, pp. 95-9.

⁴ Cadbury, pp. 154 ff.

⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 153-4.

⁶ Hawkins, p. 18 (the expression is asterisked) and p. 40. Cadbury, p. 132.

⁷ Hawkins, p. 23 (the word is asterisked); Cadbury, p. 172.

⁸ Hawkins, pp. 22 and 28.

⁹ Hawkins, p. 17 (asterisked).

¹⁰ Cadbury, p. 153, and see p. 327, n. 2 above.

¹¹ Cadbury, p. 201.

¹² *Ibid.* p. 167.

As to 48, εἶπεν πρὸς is a distinct feature of Luke's style,¹ whereas ὀδυνάομαι is more or less characteristic of Luke, who is the only New Testament author to use it, on four occasions.²

¶ In 49, one meets again the Lucanism εἶπεν πρὸς. Δεῖ referring to the necessity for Christ to fulfil God's plan is present in all four Gospels, but in the third it occurs so frequently that Hawkins characterized it as 'more or less characteristic of Luke'.³ The combination τί ὅτι occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only in Acts v. 4 and v. 9.⁴ It seems as if even the logion of Jesus was given form by Luke.⁵

Verse 50, in its vocabulary and content, is typically Lucan. Luke repeatedly elaborates on the theme of failure to comprehend (ix. 45, xviii. 34, xxiv. 25 and 45).⁶ Καὶ αὐτός is characteristic of Luke,⁷ as is ῥῆμα.⁸

Verse 51 lacks Lucanisms in the sense of Hawkins and Cadbury, whose criteria are applied above. The only words which give cause for comment are ἦν ὑποτασσόμενος. The periphrastic imperfect, though common in all parts of the New Testament, is more frequent in Luke and Acts than in other New Testament authors.⁹

The pericope appears to betray the hand of Luke throughout. One must reckon with the possibility that the tradition on which Luke based the pericope may have contained considerably less information than the present narrative. The localization of the episode in Jerusalem, the feast of the passover, the pilgrimage, the travelling party and the journeys of Jesus' parents to and from Jerusalem and Galilee, may all be due to Luke's invention. Yet it is not probable that Luke had no tradition at all at his disposal when he wrote the pericope: this assumption would fail to account for the irregularities shown by 47. On the other hand it is in principle impossible to reconstruct the tradition which was available to him. It may also be possible that Luke included just as much information in his narrative as was available to him, and only reshaped it in accordance with his own style.

Another result of an inquiry into the specifically Lucan element in Luke ii. 41-51 concerns the relationship between this pericope and ch. xix of the Greek Gospel of Thomas, which also relates the episode of the boy Jesus in the temple. Several Lucan words and phrases in ii. 41-51 also occur in the corresponding chapter of the Greek Thomas (ἔτος, γονεῖς, ἐν μέσῳ, ὀδυνώμενοι, and χάριτι of 52). The most significant expression which both writings

¹ *Ibid.* pp. 202-3; Hawkins, p. 21.

² Hawkins, p. 24; Laurentin, *Jésus*, p. 36.

³ Hawkins, p. 24.

⁴ Τί ὅτι also occurs in the LXX and as a variant reading in Mark ii. 16. Blass-Debrunner, § 299.

⁵ Van Iersel, p. 170 n. 2.

⁶ Cadbury, p. 107; Laurentin, *Jésus*, p. 12.

⁷ Hawkins, pp. 19 and 41; Cadbury, p. 193; W. Michaelis, 'Das unbetonte καὶ αὐτός bei Lukas', *Studia theologica* iv (1950), 86-93.

⁸ Hawkins, p. 21.

⁹ Blass-Debrunner, § 353: 'die meisten nt. Beispiele entfallen auf Lukas (Ev. und den ersten Teil der Acta) . . . '.

have in common is ἐν τῷ ὑποστρέφειν αὐτούς, a phrase which in Luke is certainly redactional. As the redactional element of Luke ii. 41–51 seems to be present in Thomas xix, it is clear that the Greek Thomas-Gospel is not independent of Luke.

VI. THEOLOGICAL MOTIFS

1. *Jesus' wisdom*

The tension between the theme of Jesus' wisdom (47) and that of his relationship to his heavenly Father (49), referred to in the introduction to this paper, appears to be explicable from the history of the composition of the pericope. The first theme was not always part of it, but was a secondary addition, either by Luke or by one of his predecessors.

The theme of Jesus' wisdom was certainly conceived by Luke as a biographical motif. This is indisputably indicated by the statements in 40, 'the child grew big and strong and full of wisdom' and 52, 'Jesus grew up and advanced in wisdom', in which the categories of physical and intellectual growth are closely linked. Moreover, it is precisely in hellenistic biography that the theme of the precociously intelligent child became a traditional literary motif. Luke's adaptation of this biographical motif, however, probably rests on theological assumptions. As far as Jesus' *sophia* is concerned, the impulse did not come from I Samuel, as U. Wilckens wrongly suggested.¹ In I Sam. ii. 21 and 26 there is no reference at all to Samuel's wisdom. As Völter² and Stählin³ have rightly seen, a closer parallel is Sir. li. 13–17, where the author says that when he was still young he sought wisdom, praying for it before the temple (i.e. in the forecourt of the temple) and that from his childhood he applied himself to seek wisdom and made much progress in it.

However, the emphasis in Sir. li falls rather on eager devotion to the search (13: ἐζήτησα) for wisdom than on its possession and display, as in Luke ii. The young Sirach of chapter li asked God for it (14: ἠξίουσιν) and would continue to pursue it till his death (14: ἕως ἑσχάτων ἐκζητήσω αὐτήν). He followed in wisdom's footsteps (15: ἵχνησον) and even became uneasy from his search (21: ἡ κοιλία μου ἐταράχθη τοῦ ἐκζητῆσαι αὐτήν). Jesus, on the other hand, according to Luke, had already possessed wisdom from his childhood (even if he too had to 'increase' in it), and even as a child he had already shown proofs of an amazing intelligence. This appears to correspond to another Jewish tradition.

In late-Jewish descriptions of the coming Messiah (or whatever he may be called in the various sources), it is regularly stated that he will be endowed with wisdom: a spirit of wisdom and a spirit of understanding will rest upon

¹ *Th. Wb. zum N.T.* vii, 515, line 4.

² D. Völter, *Die evangelischen Erzählungen*, pp. 80–1.

³ *Th. Wb. zum N.T.* vi, 713, line 5.

or dwell in him. Speaking of the Chosen One, the author of I Enoch xlix. 3 says 'In him dwells the spirit of wisdom... and the spirit of understanding.' According to *Ps. Sol.* xvii, God will make the anointed King 'mighty by means of the Holy Spirit, and wise by means of the spirit of understanding' (ὁ θεὸς κατειργάσατο αὐτὸν δυνατὸν ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ σοφὸν ἐν βουλῇ συνέσεως, 37). *Test. Levi* xviii. 7 says that God will raise a new priest, and that 'the spirit of understanding will dwell upon him' (πνεῦμα συνέσεως καταπαύσει ἐπ' αὐτόν). In *Test. Levi* ii. 3, Ms. e, Levi prays to God for messianic functions (e.g. ποιεῖν κρίσιν ἀληθινήν εἰς πάντα τὸν αἰῶνα). In this prayer he says: 'Show me, Lord, the Holy Spirit (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον) and give me counsel, wisdom and knowledge (βουλήν καὶ σοφίαν καὶ γνῶσιν) and strength to do what pleases you and to find favour (χάρις) in your eyes.' The earliest testimony, if not the source, of this tradition is the messianic prophecy of Isa. xi. 2:

'The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,
a spirit of wisdom and understanding,
a spirit of counsel...'
ἀναπαύσεται ἐπ' αὐτόν πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ,
πνεῦμα σοφίας καὶ συνέσεως,
πνεῦμα βουλῆς...

Despite differences in the wording, the tradition is a constant one: 'a spirit of wisdom (= the spirit of God) shall rest upon him'. It seems that there is a relationship – albeit a distant one – between this tradition and the words of Luke in ii. 40, 'he was filled with *wisdom and God's grace was upon him*'. Luke could not introduce God's 'spirit' here in ch. ii, since it was only to descend on Jesus later, at his baptism (ch. iii). If he could not use the word πνεῦμα, he could adequately convey the idea of the divine power which manifested itself in Jesus' wisdom, by the word χάρις. For the close relationship of πνεῦμα and χάρις, see e.g. Acts iv. 31–3, καὶ ἐπλήσθησαν ἅπαντες τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος... χάρις τε μεγάλη ἦν ἐπὶ πάντας. For the relationship of χάρις and σοφία, see Acts vii. 10, ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ (sc. Moses) χάρις καὶ σοφίαν.¹

Luke ii. 41–51 is a biographical rendering of the traditional conception that the Messiah would be endowed by God with wisdom and understanding (σοφία, 40; σύνεσις, 47).

¹ K. Berger, "Gnade" im frühen Christentum', *Ned. theol. tijdschrift* xxvii (1973), 1–25, tried to show that the wisdom books of the LXX assume that χάρις, in the form of *wisdom or understanding*, is given by God to his elect. This idea is indeed present in *Wisdom* iii. 9, but not in any of the other passages cited by Berger (p. 3, *Prov.* viii. 17; *Sir.* vi, 18, xxxvii. 21). It cannot therefore be accepted as a current and traditional opinion, which throws light on Luke ii. 40. More often wisdom or knowledge is, in apocalyptic contexts, a part of eschatological salvation, sometimes simply called χάρις (Berger, p. 4: I Enoch v. 8; *Test. Levi* xviii. 9; Luke i. 17). But this wisdom is to be shared by the many who will share in the time of salvation. Luke ii. 40, in which wisdom and understanding are ascribed to Jesus alone, cannot be directly related to this tradition.

2. *Jerusalem*

The localization of Luke ii. 46–50 in the temple of Jerusalem has perhaps an importance which goes beyond the episode in itself. In Acts, Luke is intent on emphasizing the idea that the origin of the church was closely linked with Jerusalem and the temple (Acts ii. 46, iii, iv. 1, v. 20–5, 42). He says explicitly that the preaching of the church began in Jerusalem (Luke xxiv. 47). By choosing the temple at Jerusalem as the scene of ii. 41–51, Luke also created an analogy between the first phase of Jesus' activities and the initial phase of the history of the church.

There is, in my opinion, no occasion to assume that the pericopes of ii. 22–51 (circumcision, presentation, the boy Jesus in the temple), were intended to serve as typological pendants to the beginnings of the history of the church, as it is related in Acts. Rather, Luke was concerned to connect both the early life of Jesus and the earliest phase of church history with Jerusalem and the temple, in order to make clear that the acts of Jesus and the church were the legitimate historically based continuation of the history of Israel. 'Hier wird der Anspruch der Kirche, das wahre Israel zu sein, fundiert', wrote Conzelmann, although in quite another context.¹ Luke had the same intention when he transposed the second and third temptation (iv. 1–13, cf. Matthew iv. 1–11) with the result that Jesus' public preaching appears to have begun in Jerusalem.² Above all, Luke's redaction of the cleansing of the temple (xix. 45–8) also reveals this theological purpose. Jesus' entrance to Jerusalem is transformed by Luke into an entrance to the temple; after he cleansed it, Jesus used it as a fixed place of instruction. Thus, he 'annexed' the temple, and rebutted Jewish claims to it.³ The claim of the Jews to the temple as the centre of their religion can no longer be accepted. Their religion is obsolete, and the temple has become the starting point of a new religion, and a new phase in the history of man's salvation.

3. *I was bound* (δεῖ)

Δεῖ sometimes means that divine laws were to be fulfilled (Luke xiii. 14, ἐξ ἡμέραι εἰσὶν ἐν αἷς δεῖ ἐργάζεσθαι), sometimes that natural human norms were to be respected (Luke xv. 32, εὐφρανθῆναι δὲ καὶ χαρῆναι ἔδει, ὅτι ὁ ἀδελφός σου οὗτος νεκρός ἦν καὶ ἔζησεν). But δεῖ refers in particular, in Luke more often than in other evangelists, to Jesus' task of proclaiming the kingdom of God, and undergoing in Jerusalem the fate of the prophets (e.g. iv. 43, xiii. 33). Jesus' whole life was defined by this δεῖ, from his first appearance as a twelve-year-old (ii. 49) to his death (xxii. 37), resurrection (Acts xvii. 3) and ascension (Acts iii. 21). This δεῖ is based on God's decisions which are recorded in

¹ H. Conzelmann, *Die Mitte der Zeit* (Tübingen, 1954), p. 62, dealing with the triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

² Conzelmann, *Mitte*, p. 18.

³ *Ibid.* p. 64, 'Im Blick auf die Kirche ist der Anspruch der Juden widerlegt. Ihre Berufung auf den Tempel, die Tradition, besteht zu Unrecht.'

the Old Testament,¹ cf. Luke xxiv. 44, 'Everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and Psalms, was bound to be fulfilled'. The relationship between God's decisions and their revelation in the Old Testament by the Holy Spirit is made especially clear in Acts iv. 25-8. According to this passage, Jesus' passion and death are said to have been foreordained by God's hand and by God's decree.

Luke's viewpoint can be analysed as follows:

(a) God had earlier decided, and had revealed his decision in the Old Testament, that he would send someone to announce good news, who would suffer and be rejected, and be put to death as a prophet in Jerusalem;

(b) because God decided these things and made his decision known, they *must* happen (δεῖ);

(c) Jesus is the one whom God has chosen to fulfil his intentions;

(d) Jesus himself was aware that God had chosen him for the realization of his intentions and decisions.

The verb δεῖ thus refers in the first place to the necessity with which God's intention, once revealed, must be fulfilled; and only in the second place does it refer to the duty which God laid upon Jesus, and which Jesus took upon himself.

In many cases it is easy to determine the Old Testament passage to which Luke's δεῖ refers. In iv. 43, for example, Jesus says 'I must give the good news of the kingdom of God . . . , for that was what I was sent to do'. This statement stands in a clear relationship to Isaiah lxi. 1, cited immediately before by Luke in iv. 18. The Old Testament basis of Luke ii. 49, however, cannot be ascribed so easily. Many passages are contenders, but it is also possible that Luke was not thinking of a specific passage in the Old Testament. He may have derived Jesus' duty to occupy himself with the affairs of his Father from the general image which he had formed of the Son of God, and may have assumed that this image as a whole could be verified from the Old Testament. Another possibility is that the revelations and prophecies of Luke i. 32-3 (the annunciation) and ii. 29-38 (Simeon and Anna) in Luke's opinion made it sufficiently clear that Jesus had a place and duty in the realization of God's intention. Be this as it may, Luke did not trouble himself with the scriptural basis of his δεῖ in ii. 49. For him, the only important fact was that Jesus' actions were willed and decided by the Father, and that Jesus had become aware of this, and that this position had been given him by God.

4. *My Father*

In ii. 49 Jesus does not say that he had to be in the house/affairs of 'God' but of 'my Father'. The conception on which ii. 49 is based is therefore not merely that Jesus was the Son of God, for in the tradition which ascribes to

¹ E. Fascher, 'Theologische Beobachtungen zu δεῖ', in *Neutestamentliche Studien für Rudolf Bultmann* (Berlin, 1954) (*BZNTW* xxi), pp. 228-54, esp. 245-7.

Jesus the title of 'Son of God', God does not play the role of father, and the relationship between Father and Son remains unexplored. The tradition which influenced ii. 49 was not that of the Son of God, but that of 'the Son', or 'the Son and the Father'.¹ In Luke, this tradition is most clearly observable in x. 22: 'No one knows who the Son is but the Father, or who the Father is but the Son' (//Matthew xi. 27), immediately preceded by the words 'my Father': 'everything is entrusted to me by my Father'. As is well known, this is a christological tradition which, apart from the Synoptic Gospels (e.g. Mark xiii. 32), is adopted in particular in the Johannine writings. It is therefore not surprising that the Gospel of John very frequently puts the words 'my Father' in Jesus' mouth (at least twenty-two times).

From Luke x. 22 it appears that the third evangelist understood the phrase 'my Father' to stand in a very close relationship with the expressions 'the Son' and 'the Father' used absolutely. The possessive pronoun clearly expresses the same relationship as is suggested by the juxtaposition of the absolute expressions 'the Son' and 'the Father'. This relationship consists of a strong mutual involvement, the consequence of which is that the Son is endowed with full powers which are given to him and to no other. 'Everything is entrusted to me by my Father', Luke x. 22; 'I vest in you the kingship which my Father vested in me', Luke xxii. 29; 'I am sending upon you my Father's promised gift', Luke xxiv. 49. These are – apart from ii. 49 – all the passages in which Luke puts the words 'my Father' on Jesus' lips. It cannot be coincidence that in all three places in which Jesus speaks of God as 'my Father', he is represented as being authorized by 'the Father' to transmit the gifts of God (knowledge of God, kingship, the Spirit) to mankind. In this view, contacts between God and man are only possible through 'the Son', so that the Son automatically attains a position between God and man, i.e. above man, and therefore also above his parents.

However, it is not only God's authorization which gives the Son a position above all other men, it is also the exclusiveness of the mutual relationship of the Son and the Father. If the Son and the Father are one, as John x. 30 expresses it, then there is no place left for Jesus' natural parents. This is the situation of Luke ii. 49. Jesus dismisses the claims of his parents by appealing to his specific relationship to 'his' Father.

There is another pericope in Luke in which Jesus dismisses his parents rather brusquely: viii. 19–21. Völter, in a discussion which is still well worth reading,² tried to show that Luke wrote ii. 41–51 under the influence of, *inter alia*, the Marcan parallel to this pericope, Mark iii. 31–5. This possibility should not be altogether excluded, but the differences cannot be overlooked. In Luke viii. 19–21 (//Mark iii. 31–5) Jesus declares that his true

¹ Ferdinand Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel* (Göttingen, 1966³), pp. 319–33. P. G. Voss, *Die Christologie der lukianischen Schriften in Grundzügen* (Paris/Brügge, 1965), p. 120, wrongly dismisses the distinction between the traditions of the 'Son of God' and 'the Son and the Father'.

² D. Völter, *Die evangelischen Erzählungen*, pp. 78–9.

kindred are those 'who hear the word of God and act upon it'. This places blood relationship beneath the fulfilment of God's will. In Luke ii. 41-51 the relationship with the parents is placed beneath the relationship of the Father and the Son. This is a considerable difference. The point of Luke viii. 21 is of an ethical character; that of ii. 49 is christological: Jesus is the Son who stands in an exclusive relationship to the Father.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

Some of the results achieved in the above study can be summarized as follows.

1. One of the objectives of Luke ii. 41-51 is to express, and illustrate, the fact that Jesus stood in a special and exclusive relationship to God. For this purpose, ii. 49 used the christological tradition of 'the Son and the Father'.

2. Under the influence of Jewish eschatological traditions, according to which a 'spirit of wisdom and understanding' was to rest upon the Messiah, the pericope credits Jesus with amazing intelligence.

3. The representation of Jesus as displaying surprising intelligence as a child reflects a theme of hellenistic biography. This theme had in fact already entered Jewish literature before Luke.

4. The theme of Jesus' precocious intelligence does not seem always to have been part of the pericope, but to have been added to it during the transmission of the narrative. This addition explains the tension between the theme of Jesus' wisdom and that of his exclusive relationship to 'the Father', which may have been stressed in an earlier version.

5. The structure of the pericope in its present-day form is a good example of concentric symmetry, which gives a clearly defined role to Jesus sitting amongst the doctors, and thus to his intelligence.

6. Ev. Thom. Gr. xix shows signs of dependence on Luke ii.

7. Laurentin's interpretation that the pericope is a mysterious 'prolepsis' of Easter and Christ's exaltation is unacceptable.

8. The expression ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς μου is deliberately ambivalent. Within the context of the episode ii. 41-51, it means 'in the house of my Father', yet *at the same time* it has a meaning which goes beyond the episode: Jesus is depicted as being involved in his Father's plans and their realization.

9. The unusual sequence of the words 'your Father and I' prefigures the play on the meaning of the word 'Father'.

10. Luke ii. 46b-47 is not to be located in a temple synagogue.

11. The phrase 'after three days' in ii. 46 means 'only after several days'. The three days are not to be divided into the different stages of the journey of Jesus' parents, as it is related in ii. 44-6. The phrase 'after three days' certainly does not contain any allusion to the 'third day' of Jesus' resurrection.

12. The reference to Jesus as being aged twelve in Luke ii. 42 does not bear any relationship to the age of *bar mitzvah*, nor does it serve to illustrate the piety of Jesus' parents. According to the idea generally held in Luke's day, childhood for boys ended in about the fourteenth year. The 'twelve years' mentioned in ii. 42, chosen as a stereotyped round figure, place Jesus in the age group of those who had not reached the age of *ephebeia* and secondary schooling. The statement of his age consequently accentuates the extraordinary character of his intelligence.