

of God to which we are dedicated. But our Lord does not hold us simply to that; he leads us on. 'I no longer call you servants but friends'. He leads us on to the unity of mutual love where we give and take—the giving and taking and sharing in the mind and the will of our Lord by having the sacramental grace pouring into us. 'I no longer call you servants but friends'; not only religious but perfect religious or religious lovers, all those who are living our Lord's life not simply externally by dedication but internally by the fire of charity. This is surely the secret of our religious life and of our life of prayer. We know how to share in the action of the mass and how to be actively preparing throughout the first part of the mass and gradually leading ourselves on until we are over-powered by God through his sacramental activity, not only as individuals but as a community above all. It is the very life blood of the community. It is what draws the whole community together and makes it into one thing, this life of prayer and charity springing from our Lord in the eucharist.

Our Lady in Scripture—IV: Daughter of Zion

BENET WEATHERHEAD, O.P.

The infancy narrative of the third gospel, Luke 1. 5—2. 52, is very different in character from that of the first gospel, longer, richer in allusions, written from a somewhat different angle, and using a different series of events. It goes without saying that the main explicit purpose of both is the same, to introduce the gospel narrative with an account of the origin of the Messiah: Jesus is the heir to the messianic kingdom, born miraculously of a virgin, and either by blood or by legal adoption a member of the royal line. But the divergences soon begin. In Matthew the principal actor is Joseph, in Luke, Mary. In Matthew, the story is one largely of danger and conflict, the infant Messiah is taken for

refuge to a foreign land, gentiles acknowledge and protect him. In Luke the narrative is almost wholly joyous and he is acclaimed by representatives of his own people. The perspective is so different that it is impossible to avoid the suspicion that Luke's was written in an early period when it seemed as though the whole people might accept their Messiah; Matthew later when the breach between the leaders of Israel and the primitive Christian church had embittered their relations. In style too the narrative of Luke is continually reminiscent of the Old Testament, so much so that it must be either supposed that he was deliberately archaizing, imitating the greek of the Septuagint, or that he was translating and adapting a document or documents already written in aramaic or more probably hebrew. This latter alternative seems preferable to many recent scholars: the preface to the gospel shows that Luke was consciously drawing on earlier sources, and we know from the findings at Qumran that the hebrew language continued to be written. This is consonant too with the fact that the ideas and modes of expression are entirely Jewish, even Old Testament, in character and this would have been a feat of imaginative re-creation almost impossible for a gentile convert writing not long before the fall of Jerusalem. Nevertheless, despite the Old Testament colouring, the narrative is written in such a way that a new current of thought is discernible. It does not quote directly from the Old Testament in the way that the infancy narrative of the first gospel does, that is by introducing the Old Testament words with the phrase 'as it is written' or an equivalent—except in one instance (2. 23)—but instead is written in such a way that the language alludes to and recalls phrases and passages of the Old Testament. This method of writing (midrash) was a genre of the time and presupposes in the reader a knowledge of the scriptures that few Christians today possess. But if we are to understand the richness of Luke's infancy narrative and its theological implications we have to track them down and render them explicit. Here we are concerned with them as they illuminate the figure of Mary and indirectly therefore as they indicate the beginnings of a Christology.¹

(a) *The annunciation to Zechariah.* 1. 5-25.

It is evident that one principle determining the structure of Luke's narrative is the parallelism between John and Jesus, the two annunciations, the two births. This parallelism extends into quite small items—the angel appears to Zechariah and prophesies the birth of a son,

¹I am very largely indebted for the arguments in this article to René Laurentin, *Structure et Théologie de Luc I-II*, Paris, 1957.

Zechariah asks a question, the angel justifies himself (by revealing his identity) and gives Zechariah a sign; similarly the angel appears to Mary and prophesies the birth of a son, Mary asks a question, the angel justifies the prophecy (by a further prophecy of divine action) and gives Mary a sign. Again, each birth story includes circumcision, a visit of wondering neighbours and a note indicating the hidden life that follows. But within this structure the contrasts are equally forceful; the conception of John follows an Old Testament pattern, that is, by natural means though of parents of whom it would be thought that they were too old for this to happen, the conception of Jesus is brought about by divine power and Mary remains a virgin. Zechariah's question betrays a certain lack of faith and the sign given to him is also a penalty for it, Mary's question must be understood as a simple request for enlightenment and the sign given to her is a joyful one, the pregnancy of her barren cousin Elizabeth. Moreover, as the narrative proceeds the parallelism breaks down; there is no equivalent on the side of John for the presentation in the temple and the first passover of Jesus. The primacy of Mary's child is left established, Mary's child is the Messiah, in some sense the son of God, Elizabeth's is a prophet, 'great before the Lord' but not of the same dignity.

In itself this seems sufficient to account for the pre-eminence of Mary's son and the structural imbalance of the diptych, but the words of the angel to Zechariah carry an allusion which, taken in the general context, suggests a profounder reason and a new if submerged theme. The angel says to Zechariah of John:

He will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God,
and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah,
to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children
and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just,
to make ready for the Lord a people prepared. (I. 16-17).

It is a description of the mission of John, and it alludes to the prophecy of Malachi, 3. 23-24. This prophecy was the source of the belief widespread in New Testament times that Elijah was to return as herald of the messianic era. It was applied very early to the activity of the Baptist (Mt. 17. 9-13, by Jesus in a spiritual sense, and Jn. 1. 21, denied by John himself in a literal sense) and in its immediate context in Malachi—'before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes'—it suits admirably the message of the Baptist, a message of repentance to the entire people under the threat of divine judgment. But in Malachi itself it can be read as a further addition to an earlier passage also about

one who is sent on a mission of purification:

Behold, I send my messenger to prepare the way before me
and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his
temple. (Mal. 3. 1).

This prophetic passage is addressed to the priesthood of the second temple and goes on to describe how the day of the Lord is applied to them and to their purification. That Luke is alluding to the book of Malachi and not to the general belief in Elijah's return is shown by the fact that 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children' is a literal quotation from Malachi; thus there is no improbability in the suggestion that in this way he is alluding to the collective sense of Malachi's prophecies of the one who is to be sent.

It fits well into the context also in Luke. We are so familiar with the events of the infancy narrative, in particular with the birth story and the role of Mary, that we do not notice how the whole narrative is focussed on the temple, the priesthood and the liturgical worship. It opens with a priest celebrating the incense offering in the temple and closes with a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the passover and a scene in the temple. The first child is the son of a priest and so a priest himself, Mary is the cousin of Elizabeth of whom it is specially noted that she was of priestly descent. Jesus is presented in the temple with an allusion to sacrifice. This general interest in the temple re-inforces the associations of the quotation. It seems that Luke, or the earlier author of his source, is suggesting a series of identifications, concealed either through discretion or because he himself is groping towards the mystery or some way of expressing the mystery of the identity of Mary's child. The messenger who is to be sent to prepare the way of the Lord is the child of Elizabeth, the one who comes suddenly to the temple to purify the sons of Levi is the son of Mary, those who seek the Lord are Simeon who was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and Anna and those who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. This is perhaps to put it too bluntly; the prophecy of Malachi is more plainly fulfilled in the adulthood of John and Jesus, the preparation of the people by John, the coming of Jesus to the temple and the purification of it, for example, when he drove out the money changers and merchants. The fulfilment suggested in this concealed way in the infancy narrative is a preliminary realization only. What is important for us is the tentative and mysterious identification of Mary's child with the Lord who is to come to the temple. It is a hint at the divine nature of the person of Jesus, and may be compared in its tentativeness with the passage in Mt. 1. 23 where

the author quotes Isaiah 7. 14: this he does to vindicate from prophecy the virginity of Jesus' mother, but he also takes care to translate the hebrew name Emmanuel, 'which means God with us'. He does not draw the conclusion that Jesus who is with us is God but the suggestion is there.

(b) *The annunciation to Mary*, I. 26-38.

Just as the angel's words to Zechariah are moulded by the prophecy of Malachi, so the angel's words to Mary are moulded by other prophecies and passages from the Old Testament. In the first rank of these, so to speak, are the explicitly messianic ones, the references to 2 Samuel 7 and the two Emmanuel prophecies of Isaiah (7. 14; 9. 6-8), but these are primarily to do with Mary's child and the messiahship and do not throw so much light on the figure of Mary herself, except in so far as the first Isaiah prophecy implies her virginity and that has been sufficiently established. The passage from 2 Samuel however immediately follows the account of David's transporting the ark to Jerusalem, and this association will be noted when we consider the allusions woven into the story of the visitation.

These first-rank references however by no means exhaust the implications of the account of the annunciation. Three further ones call for examination.

(i) The angel's greeting and first speech. We use the angel's greeting every day. 'Hail . . . full of grace, the Lord is with thee'. How is the opening word to be translated? Our version takes it as the equivalent of an ordinary greeting, but the Greek word used, though again the habitual word of greeting, means literally 'rejoice' and, it has been pointed out,² occurs also in certain passages of the Septuagint to translate an expression in hebrew much stronger than a mere greeting. These passages are Zephaniah 3. 14, Joel 2. 21, and Zechariah 9. 9. Two of these, Zephaniah and Zechariah, are addressed to 'the daughter of Zion', a personification of the city and its inhabitants. The passage of Zechariah is the one quoted by Matthew (21. 5) and John (12. 15) at the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, and it is interesting to notice that while both keep the title 'daughter of Zion', applying it to the city itself, neither of them includes the injunction to rejoice. The significant point is that all three Old Testament passages are solemn announcements of the coming of messianic times. Thus, it seems, if we are to

²S. Lyonnet, in *Biblica* 20 (1939), pp. 131-141. His arguments are condensed in R. Laurentin, *op.cit.* p. 65 footnotes.

accept this reasoning, we should translate the angel's opening word as 'rejoice' and understand it too as an announcement of the coming of the messianic era, addressed not now to a personification of the people or the city but to the person in whom God's love and favour towards the people and city are most concretely realized.

If we look at the wider context of Zephaniah 3. 14 we find a number of other phrases and themes which are echoed in the text of Luke. Thus:

Zeph. 3. 12	I will remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones, and you shall no longer be haughty in my holy mountain . . .	cp Luke 1. 51f.
12	For I will leave in the midst of you a people humble and lowly.	48, 52
13	They shall seek refuge in the name of the Lord, those who are left in Israel . . .	49
14	Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem!	28
15	The Lord has taken away the judgment against you, he has cast out your enemies. The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst you shall fear evil no more . . .	71 31
16	Do not fear, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak.	30
17	The Lord, your God, is in your midst, . . .	31
20	Yea, I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth.	49

The elements of this passage which are echoed in Luke are so obvious that it is hardly necessary to enumerate them—the arrogant within Israel are rejected and a new people, the remnant of the former, will be left, their humility and piety contrasting with the arrogance and impiety of the rejected; the Lord will come as saviour to deliver his people from their external enemies: he will take up his residence in their midst, in the holy city and the temple on the holy mountain Zion. The prophet calls on the people to rejoice and cease to fear.

One phrase calls for special examination, 'the Lord is in your midst'. In the Hebrew this phrase employs a word which means the inward parts of the human body or the interior of a place or group of people. Thus it is used in Genesis 25. 22 of the womb of Rebecca in which the

twins Esau and Jacob struggled. It is a more general word and not the usual one for the womb, but it could have this sense. In Zephaniah, since the figure he is addressing is on the surface of it a mere personification, and quite a usual one in prophetic writing, the phrase would be unlikely to suggest bodily associations, but this might perhaps occur to a Palestinian Christian searching the scriptures. That it did occur to Luke or his source is suggested by one feature of Luke 1. 21: it is an emphatic, even over-loaded, phrase, 'you will conceive in your womb and bear a son'. 'you will conceive' would have been quite sufficient by itself, and the words 'in your womb' could have been represented in Luke's source by the same word as 'in your midst' in Zephaniah. This is evident in the same way in the Greek as it is in the English. Moreover, it is again emphasized and in the same over-loaded way in 2. 21, though here Luke in the Greek uses a slightly more usual, and more elegant, word for the womb.

Thus we seem to have again the same situation as in the annunciation to Zechariah. The Lucan context carries a number of allusions to a passage of the Old Testament and a verbal hint of some important identification. Zephaniah called on the Daughter of Zion to rejoice over the arrival of her Lord in her midst, Luke's manner of writing invites us to identify the Daughter of Zion with Mary and the Lord with the son she is to conceive and carry in her womb.

(ii) The overshadowing.

'The Holy Spirit will come upon you
and the power of the Most High will overshadow you;
therefore the child to be born will be holy
and will be called the Son of God'. I. 35.

The first two lines of this speech of the angel must be taken to be a double version, according to the parallelism of hebrew poetry, of one fact, that the virginal conception will be brought about by the power of God. But the associations of the expressions the angel uses contain two possible sets of allusions. The first line suggests the ancient hebrew notion of the spirit of Yahweh as inspiring ecstatic behaviour or heroic strength and wisdom or prophecy, the spirit of God which descended on the judges and prophets and which was to rest upon the messianic king according to Isaiah 11. 1. But the second line alludes even more clearly to another Old Testament image, that of the cloud which overshadowed the tabernacle. This image is found in several passages but the clearest reference is to Exodus 40. 35. Basically, visually so to speak, the image is double, of cloud and fire, the fire within or beneath the cloud,

within like lightning in a cloud or beneath like a fire beneath smoke. It is the symbol par excellence of the presence of God. It occurs in one form in Abraham's covenant with God in Genesis 15. 17, in another in the Exodus tradition of the cloud that led the people by day but was seen as fire by night. It manifests the presence of God on Mount Sinai (Ex. 24. 15-17) and in the tent which he visits or in which he dwells (Ex. 40. 34 ff.) during the desert wanderings. It confirms his presence in the temple when Solomon dedicates it (2 Chron. 5. 13 ff.). The cloud descends and overshadows tent or tabernacle and the glory of God burns and shines from within.³ We find the same association of cloud, light and glory in Luke's account of the Transfiguration and the same word, overshadowing, of the cloud which conceals and yet manifests the divine presence. What is interesting here in the account of the Annunciation is that only one side of the symbol is expressed—the spirit and power of God descend and overshadow the virgin. It must surely be understood that the divine presence is within her as it was in the tabernacle the cloud overshadowed. And therefore the child will be holy, since, the silence hints, he is in some way to be identified with the Holy One of Israel, the one who dwells in the holy place. And the virgin mother is to be identified with the tent or sanctuary he fills with his holy presence, with his glory.

(iii) The faith of Mary. One other allusion must be touched on: Luke 1. 37 reproduces almost exactly Genesis 18. 14. In Genesis, Yahweh himself visits Abraham and promises that Sarah, long barren and past the age of childbearing, will conceive and bear a son; in Luke, the angel gives Mary the sign of her cousin Elizabeth's pregnancy and Elizabeth's situation is exactly that of Sarah. But there is a transposition. In Genesis, though Sarah scoffed Abraham believed (Gen. 15. 6), but in Luke, Zechariah who should be Abraham's counterpart fails to live up to Abraham's faith. It is Mary who makes an act of faith comparable to that of Abraham, Mary therefore who is the true daughter of Abraham and whose act of faith is perhaps going to make a new beginning in sacred history comparable to or exceeding that which stems from Abraham's.

³For the theology of this image see the series of articles by Joseph Bourke, O.P., in *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*, March, May, November 1961, and April 1962.