THE CENSUS OF QUIRINIUS RECONSIDERED

A NARRATIVE - CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF LUKE 1 - 3:

THE CENSUS OF QUIRINIUS RECONSIDERED

By

JENNIFER ELLEN NETTLETON, B.A.

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AUTHOR: Jennifer Ellen Nettleton, B.A.   (University of Toronto)

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ABSTRACT

The Lucan gospel alone makes mention of the census of Quirinius in relation to the birth of Jesus (2:2). This temporal marker has consequently been used to date the birth of Jesus, but not without problems. The census reference, when understood in relation to its historical referent, causes chronological incongruity and faulty technical details within the Lucan narrative. In contrast to the many attempts which seek to maintain the historical integrity of the Lucan gospel by reconciling temporal incongruity, I contend that the census is a constituent element of the narrative. As such, the key to understanding the census reference lies in appreciating its narrative function rather than its unlikely referential function.

This thesis involves a narrative-critical analysis of Luke 1-3. After an examination of the state of the Quirinius question in chapter one, I investigate three ways in which the census of Quirinius interacts with the other elements of the narrative in Luke 1-3. In the second chapter the census is discussed as a part of the setting of the narrative. Through temporal analysis I demonstrate that the census is an integral part of the Lucan temporal framework. The third chapter focuses on plot in Luke 1-3, and shows how the census contributes to its overall development. Lastly, I explore the narrative processes of characterization which contrast the respective roles of Jesus and John. The census assists in distinguishing Jesus as the primary agent of God. The analysis of these three aspects of the narrative illustrates that the census of Quirinius is an essential component, skilfully interwoven with the other elements of the narrative.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Luke 1-3 is replete with markers that denote the temporal parameters of the narrative. Some of these temporal markers are dependent upon previous ones ("on the eighth day. . ." Lk 1:59), while other markers are independent ("in the days of Herod" Lk 1:5). Together these temporal markers create a chronological framework within which the narrative unfolds. Each temporal marker is a constituent element of the narrative, and contributes to the overall presentation of the story. One such marker, the census of Quirinius (Lk 2:1-2), belongs to this narrative framework, and is an integral part of the Lucan narrative.

Whereas earlier scholarship insisted that Luke was a historian because he incorporated numerous historical references into his Gospel,[1] more recent Lucan scholarship has given consideration to other facets of the gospel, such as the literary structure, theological aspects, and stages of composition of the writing.[2] Through the utilization of form, source, redaction, and composition criticism the historical critical enterprise has exposed inaccurate historical chronology, faulty details, and other

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[1]Many statements are indicative of this position. For example, William Ramsay stated that "Luke is a historian of the first rank." Quoted in I. Howard Marshall, Luke: Historian and Theologian (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1979), p. 18.

[2]For example, see the comprehensive commentary by Joseph A. Fitzmyer, The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX), The Anchor Bible, vol. 28, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1981).

1

discrepancies in the Lucan Gospel. With this shift in interest, the earlier emphasis on the historical integrity of the Lucan Gospel has been questioned. And yet, some of these proposed solutions are still efforts to defend the historical accuracy of Luke.

The treatment of the temporal reference to the census of Quirinius (Luke 2:2) is a case in point. The narrative outlines that the birth of Jesus took place during the process of enrolment for this census. At first glance this appears to be a solid historical referent to the birth of Jesus, assuring its historicity. Upon closer examination, this marker, when viewed referentially, does not concretely date the birth of Jesus, but instead causes conflict with other temporal markers and referents included in the narrative. Many endeavours to defend the Lukan Gospel with twentieth century notions of historical accuracy have resulted in several theories, none of which can fully account for the temporal incongruity encountered in the Lukan infancy narrative. Succinctly stated, the temporal problem caused by the census is referential. According to Mary Anne Tolbert, "the meaning or reason for any aspect of the story should be sought *first inside the story itself* before external references are considered."[3] Her point is clear, and this strategy is meaningful because "the narrative develops its own sense and coherence" without reference to history.[4] Therefore, a shift away from the historical-

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[3]While she refers specifically to the Markan Gospel, her statement is no less true for the other Gospels. Mary Ann Tolbert, Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary-Historical Perspective (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), p. 31.

[4]Ibid., p. 32.

critical paradigm, which relies on the biblical texts as evidence for reconstructing the history to which they refer,[5] is required.

The recent shift from the author-centred approach of historical critical analysis to the text-centred approach of literary criticism has given biblical studies new impetus to address this problem. With the tools of literary criticism,[6] particularly the branch known to biblical scholars as 'Narrative Criticism,' I propose to examine the setting, plot and characterization of the Lucan infancy narrative in Luke 1-3. In this way I intend to demonstrate that the key to understanding the census of Quirinius lies in appreciating its function within the narrative rather than in its referential function.

A narrative critical approach implies several things about the text. First, our analysis will be based on the text of Luke in its received form, not on the sources which may have contributed to its present form.[7] Second, our analysis assumes the unity of this received text, as we investigate the manner in which the census interrelates with the other components of the narrative. Third, our approach views the received text as an end

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[5]Norman Peterson, Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics, Guides to Biblical Scholarship (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p. 9.

[6]By literary criticism I mean the branch of scholarship which insists upon the autonomy of a text as an aesthetic whole, a literary work that deserves to be appreciated on its own terms. In Biblical Studies the focus of such an approach is not on the hypothetical sources which may comprise the gospels, nor the stages of composition, but rather, on the literary world projected by the text in its present form. For a brief discussion of the differences between literary criticism and historical criticism see Mark Allan Powell, What is Narrative Criticism?, Guides to Biblical Scholarship, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), pp. 6-10.

[7]This does not imply that other approaches to the biblical narrative are invalid; rather, it proposes an alternative method by which to reconsider the Lucan reference to the census.

in itself, not as a means to understand the reflected world that underlies the text. Murray Krieger's metaphor of the mirror and window is useful for clarifying this last point.[8] The text as window is the focus on the pre-literary history of the text, where the text stands between the reader and early Christianity. In this way the text may be used to reconstruct something upon which the text is based, and meaning is found in the events to which the text refers. But Hans Frei raises a hermeneutical question that results from this process of peering through the narrative window and seeing the events which the narrative refers to as its actual meaning. He contends that "the narrative shape and meaning of biblical texts [becomes] eclipsed by the significance attributed to the events."[9] The other half of the metaphor avoids this hermeneutical problem. The text as mirror refers to the relationship of the text and reader, where narrative meaning resides in the interaction of text and reader. The reading process therefore plays an important part in understanding the narrative, and enables the reader to focus on the way the various components of the narrative interrelate. Hence the reader, instead of searching for the meaning of the census in an external referential framework, will locate its meaning internally, within the narrative.

This study requires first an overview of the state of the problem. In the first chapter I will examine the two basic strategies that are characteristic of the historical-

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[8]Murray Krieger, A Window to Criticism: Shakespeare's Sonnets and Modern Poetics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 3-4.

[9]Hans Frei, The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), paraphrased in Petersen, p. 21.

critical approach, giving consideration to all temporal and technical details found in Luke 1-3. In this way I will be able to demonstrate the shortcomings of these strategies. Discussion of Luke's "historicity" will permit the conclusion that Luke used details that are verisimilar.

The subsequent chapters will move away from this referential, author-centred approach, substituting in its place a text-centred approach. This will prove useful for discerning the function of the census. It will demonstrate how the census interacts with the other narrative elements.

In chapter two, the temporal parameters and the spatial context, both paramount to the setting of the narrative in Luke 1-3, will be examined. Since "control of time is an important interpretive technique in narrative,"[10] the manipulation of the temporal references and the resultant relationship between story time and narrative time will form the basis of this analysis. At the conclusion of this chapter it will be evident that the census reference is an integral component of the temporal framework of the narrative.

Chapter three will investigate the notion of plot in Luke 1-3. After identifying its nature, we will outine the development of plot in this portion of the narrative. Discussion of the various narrative events will show that the plot, which is concerned with the purpose of God (he boule tou theou), gains momentum through the pattern of prediction and fulfillment. This chapter will illustrate that the census of Quirinius, together with other narrated events, contributes to the overall progression of the plot.

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[10]Robert C. Tannehill, The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation, Vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1991), p.10.

The final chapter is concerned with characterization in Luke 1-3. By examining the narrative processes which contribute to the characterization of John and Jesus, we will ascertain how the narrative differentiates between these agents of God. The primacy of Jesus in <u>he boule tou theou</u> is established early in the narrative, and it is reinforced by many narrative elements, one of which is the census of Quirinius.

The reference to the census of Quirinius in Luke 2:2 does not constitute a major detail within the story that Luke narrates, yet it is one of many features in the text that serve a variety of functions within the narrative. While in the past, the significance of the census has been based on its function to supply the temporal context of Jesus' birth, our investigation of setting, plot, and characterization in Luke 1-3 will demonstrate that the census of Quirinius is carefully chosen to perform several integral functions within the narrative. First, the census combines with other temporal markers to create the narrative framework, which maintains the plotting of time in a coherent fashion. Second, within this temporal framework, the census plays a role in the development of the narrative's plot. Third, since the plot involves two agents of God who are unequal, the census functions with other narrative elements to contrast the characterization of these two agents, in order to indicate the primacy of Jesus. Our examination of these three aspects of the narrative will illustrate unequivocally that the census of Quirinius constitutes an essential component that is artfully interwoven with other elements of the narrative.

CHAPTER ONE

A generation of biblical scholarship has struggled to deal with the issue of Lucan historicity and the dating of the birth of Jesus. By using the internal temporal framework as a referential guide to the external situation and to date Jesus' birth, the historical-critical enterprise has exposed an incongruous temporal chronology within the Lucan infancy narrative. The main temporal markers found in Lk 1:5, 2:2, and 3:1, conflict with one another when considered referentially. The historical referents in Lk 1:5 and 3:1 are considered compatible with each other, but Lk 2:2, the census of Quirinius, is singled out as the root of the problem. There have been many attempts to reconcile this apparent discrepant chronology with the intent to save the reputation of Luke as well as the historical integrity of his Gospel.

When considered as a historical referent, the census of Quirinius is problematic on two levels. First, it creates chronological conflict with the other temporal references included by Luke; second, the technical details of Lk 2:1-5 are historically faulty. Identification of these two levels of the problem will provide the basis for evaluating the two basic approaches which attempt to justify the chronological incongruity and maintain the historical integrity of the narrative. This examination of the state of scholarship will expose both the shortcomings of the proposed solutions, and the futility of relying on the Lucan temporal markers as historical referents. Discussion of Luke's style of history

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writing will demonstrate that the use of realistic detail is not coterminous with the presentation of reality.

Luke begins his narrative account with the birth of John the Baptist. According to the vague temporal reference in 1:5, John was born en tais hemerais Herodou basileos tes Ioudaias ("in the days of Herod the king of the Jews"). The narrative implies that Jesus was conceived in the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy with John (Lk 1:36).[1] Accordingly, the phrase en tais hemerais ekeinais in 2:1 must refer to 1:5 and the subsequent temporal connectives in 1:24, 36, and 56. Hence the present form of the text implies that Jesus was also born during the reign of King Herod, some fifteen months after the initial mention of tais hemerais Herodou in 1:5. But this initial historical referent is quite vague, because King Herod ruled for the period 37-4 B.C.E. By cross reference to the infancy narrative in the Matthean Gospel,[2] it is possible to limit the time frame involved to roughly 5-4 B.C.E., the period before the death of Herod the Great.[3]

The chronological difficulty arises with the explicit external temporal referent in Luke 2:2. The legateship of Quirinius over Syria is mentioned, as well as the census which he conducted during that office. Josephus reports this census in his Antiquities,

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[1]Temporal chronology will be discussed in fuller detail in chapter two.

[2]Although this cross referencing is not desirable for a literary critical study whose main premise insists on the autonomy of a single text, I am trying to represent the chronological problem identified by historical critical scholarship.

[3]Matthew infers that Jesus was born around the time of the death of King Herod the Great in 4 B.C.E. Cf. Mt 2:1, 2:19.

and dates it to 6-7 C.E.;[4] a Roman inscription also confirms this fact.[5] External historical records firmly date the census of Quirinius to about eleven years after the death of King Herod in 6-7 C.E.. But this does not correspond to the internal chronology of Luke as set out above. The problem is further compounded with the temporal references encountered in 3:1, and 3:23. The fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar is used as the reference point for the beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist. The exact year which Luke intends by this reference is variable,[6] but most scholars concur that the reference is to the year 28-29 C.E.. The Lucan narrative further states that Jesus was baptized (3:21), and subsequently began his ministry; according to Luke, Jesus was about thirty. But, if Jesus was born during the census of Quirinius in 6 C.E. he would have only been in his early twenties, not "about thirty" in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar. Historically then, Luke was confused about his details and he was either wrong about the age of Jesus when he began his ministry, or he was wrong about the census.

This, then, is the chronological problem that has captured the attention of many scholars, and the census reference in 2:1-2 has been the focus of attention for two reasons. First, the other two temporal references (1:5, and 3:1-2) are compatible with

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[4]Josephus <u>Ant</u> 17.13,354; <u>Ant</u> 18.1,1-2.

[5]This inscription confirms Quirinius' legateship and census in Syria. Reproduced in H. Dessau, ed., <u>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</u> (Berlin: Weidmann, 1892-1916); mentioned in Fitzmyer, p. 403.

[6]Fitzmyer points out that "we do not know the frame of reference which [Luke] was using or his mode of calculating the years of the reign of Tiberius." He lists five problems that need to be considered when dealing with the dating of this reference. See <u>Ibid</u>., p. 455.

each other - it is the census which creates the chronological incongruity. Second, the census creates technical difficulties with the details in Lk 2:1-5.

Emil Schürer delineates five difficulties with the Lucan text, which result when the text is understood in a referential manner. Some of these identified difficulties anticipate and refute some of the proposed solutions below. First, historians are not aware of a general world-wide census ordered by Augustus outside this reference in Luke. Any such references are later than Luke, and most likely drew their information from him.[7] Second, there is no evidence that a Roman census would require people to register in their ancestral towns, nor were women obliged to register in person. Third, "a Roman census could not have been carried out in Palestine during the time of King Herod," because he ruled a client kingdom, independent of the Roman provincial system. Fourth, a census in Palestine during the time of Herod is apparently unheard of, since Josephus records the census in 6-7 C.E. as something new and unprecedented in Judea. Fifth, there is no concrete evidence for a census under Quirinius, the legate of Syria, which would have taken place in the days of King Herod. He was never the legate of Syria during Herod's lifetime.[8] One further technical difficulty with the census should be mentioned. There are no grounds to believe that the census of Quirinius would

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[7]For example, Schürer points out that the Suda, Cassiodorus, and the 'testimony' of Orosius undoubtedly depend on Luke for their references to a general imperial census during Augustus' reign. See The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ, vol I, revised and edited by G. Vermes and F. Millar (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1973), pp. 408-409.

[8]Ibid., pp. 407-416.

affect the inhabitants of the territory of another ruler.[9] Contrary to Luke's narrative, Galileans were not subject to a census in Judea.

In 1963, A.N. Sherwin-White remarked that the Quirinius question had reached a state of stalemate.[10] Yet subsequent scholarship has continued to dwell on this chronological difficulty.[11] Numerous solutions have been proposed by historical-critical scholars to circumvent the above mentioned temporal incongruity caused by the census reference. A survey of such scholarship reveals that despite the remark of Sherwin-White, scholars have continued to postulate new theories, or reaffirm old ones in the attempt to reconcile internal and external chronologies, and thereby maintain the historical integrity of Luke and his gospel.[12]

Two basic approaches mark the historical-critical endeavours to merge the internal temporal referents with an external chronology. First there is the approach which seeks to reinterpret the Herod chronology of Luke 1:5 to agree with the Quirinius

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[9]As governor of Syria, Quirinius' territory included Judea but not Galilee.

[10]A.N. Sherwin-White, Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 162.

[11]In recent years, scholarship has moved away from the insistence upon the historical veracity of the Lucan temporal details. For example, in his recent work on the historical Jesus, John P. Meier states that any "attempts to reconcile Luke 2:[2] with the facts of ancient history are *hopelessly contrived*" [emphasis mine]. He also warns against "using the Infancy Narratives as sources for historical information about Jesus." See A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, vol I (New York: Doubleday, 1991), p. 213.

[12]A survey of the main positions will follow in my discussion. See also Raymond E. Brown, The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narrative in Matthew and Luke (New York: Doubleday, 1977), pp. 412-418 and 547-555 for a recent treatment of the topic.

dating of Luke 2:2. Two main proposals stem from this approach. First, the ingenious

attempt to reconcile Herod to 6-7 C.E. and the date of the Quirinius census, proposed

by J. Duncan M. Derrett, does not assume, as do most of the theories, that the Herod

referred to is Herod the Great. Derrett postulates that it could be Herod Archelaus, the

son of Herod the Great, who ruled the tetrarchy of Judea, 4 B.C.E.- 6 C.E. There is

no evidence within the Lucan gospel to otherwise assume that it is Herod the Great, and

Derrett claims that scholars have fallen into a pre-critical harmonisation to the gospel of

Matthew.[13] His argumentation is valid, yet his solution resolves only part of the

conflict. Derrett is able to reconcile Lk 1:5 to Lk 2:2; however, Jesus' age at the

beginning of his ministry in Lk 3:1, 23 still does not correspond to the date of the

census. As well, Derrett fails to account for inhabitants of Galilee being subject to the

authority of Quirinius in Judea.

The second solution recognizes the likelihood that the joining of the births of

John the Baptist and Jesus reflects a theological rather than an historical fact.[14] This

proposition is based upon the paralleling of the respective annunciations and birth

sequences, which comprise the birth stories of these two characters. A greater emphasis

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[13]J. Duncan M. Derrett, "Further Light on the Narratives of the Nativity," Novum Testamentum 17 (1975), p. 83.

[14]See Brown, p. 548. The implication of this theory forms a part of Sherwin-White's thesis that Luke is correcting Matthew's rendition, thereby asserting that the birth of Jesus was not in the reign of King Herod, but in the time of Quirinius and the census. See Sherman-White, p. 167.

is placed on Jesus to indicate his superiority over John.[15] Thus the births, having been joined to emphasize the superiority of Jesus, may in fact have been separated by a number of years, despite the Lucan inferences that link them together. It is then proposed that John the Baptist was born in the time of Herod the Great (5-4 B.C.E.), and Jesus was born during the census of Quirinius (6-7 C.E.). This theory is noteworthy, because it recognizes the theological concerns and literary creativity of Luke. This denotes movement in the direction I intend to follow below, but the attempt to use this solution to harmonize the chronological dating of Lk 1:5 and Lk 2:2 must be questioned. As an effort to preserve Luke's historicity, this solution fails to consider the age of Jesus at the beginning of His ministry in Lk 3:1, 23, and it does not account for the movement of Mary and Joseph from one territory of one ruler to another for enrolment. These two criticisms of the endeavour to harmonize Lk 1:5 and Lk 2:2 in favour of Lk 2:2 have prompted scholars to opt for yet another approach to the problem: the merging of the census in Lk 2:2 with the date of the reign of King Herod the Great, Lk 1:5.

The two main streams of this approach have relied upon archaeological and linguistic evidence to support the various proposals of harmonization. First, despite the implicit problem of this solution, it has been advocated that Quirinius was the governor of Syria for two separate terms.[16] Concrete external evidence can be given for his

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[15]Chapter four will investigate the contrasting characterization of John and Jesus.

[16]W.M. Ramsay was one of the first to posit this theory in Bearing on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1914), cited in George Ogg, "The Quirinius Question Today," The Expository Times 79 (1967-1968), p. 234. Other proponents of this dubious theory are C.F. Evans, "Tertullian's

second term in that office in 6-7 C.E.[17] The achievements of Quirinius' life are summarized in Tacitus,[18] and given that certain periods are not accounted for, scholars have surmised that Quirinius' first term as governor of Syria was either 8-6 B.C.E., in conjunction with Saturnius, or 3-2 B.C.E. The foundation for this speculation stems from archaeological evidence: a broken inscription from Tivoli, which "describes an unnamed person...who twice served as legate, the second time serving as legate in Syria."[19] The inscription suggests that the anonymous person was legate twice in Syria, and it has been argued that this refers to Quirinius. However, there is no other evidence to support this assumption: Josephus does not mention any earlier legateship of Quirinius in Syria, nor does Tacitus, who certainly would have included this in his list of Quirinius' accomplishments.[20] But even if it could be proven that Quirinius was twice governor of Syria it does not resolve all the temporal problems created by the census. The earlier date of 8-6 B.C.E. renders Jesus too old in Luke 3:23, and the later date of 3-2 B.C.E. does not coincide with tais hemerais Herodou. In addition, this "solution" complicates matters, because it is unable to account for a Roman official conducting a

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References to Sentius Saturnius and the Lucan Census," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 24(1973), p. 25, and Donald L. Jones, "Luke's Unique Interest in Historical Chronology," SBL Papers (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1989), p. 381.

[17]See above, page 10, notes 4 and 5.

[18]Tacitus, Annales, 3.48.

[19]Brown, p. 551.

[20]Thus ironically, the support for the theory can be turned around to refute it. Tacitus would not have been silent on this if Quirinius had in fact been legate of Syria twice.

census in the territory of a client king. It is certain that Quirinius was once governor. There is no tangible evidence to support an earlier governorship of Quirinius; any attempts to do so create more problems than they solve.

A linguistic argument has also been used to harmonize the date of the census with the reign of King Herod. The focus of this popular alternative is the Greek word protos (Luke 2:2). Since the Greek grammar may permit another translation, scholars attempt to preserve the historicity of Luke by rendering protos equivalent to the comparative proteros ("former, prior"). Understood thus, the sentence can be translated "this registration took place prior to (or before) the legateship of Quirinius in Syria."[21] This rendering of the Greek implies that there were two censuses in Palestine, and that Jesus was born during the one prior to the well-known census of Quirinius.[22] But there is no clear reason to read protos as proteros; the phrase itself poses no grammatical problem, and would not otherwise be considered problematic, except for trying to

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[21]Proponents of this theory are numerous and include A.J. Higgins, "Sidelights on Christian Beginnings in the Greco-Roman World," Evangelical Quarterly 41 (1969), pp. 198-201, Wayne Brindle, "The Census and Quirinius: Luke 2:2," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 27 (1984), pp. 48-52. These views are supported by N. Turner Grammatical Insights into the New Testament (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1965), pp. 23-24.

[22]Two related, but less popular solutions should be mentioned. Paul Barnett posits that the apographe was the machinery used to enable the inhabitants of Herod's kingdom to take an oath of allegiance to Augustus and Herod. But such a program would surely only involve rebellious and hostile groups, and not the entire general populace. See "apographe and apographesthai in Luke 2:1-5," The Expository Times 85(1973-1974), pp. 377-380. Likewise, Wayne Brindle argues that it would have been likely, near the end of Herod's reign, which was in turmoil, that Herod might have been asked by Augustus to conduct a census. Brindle argues his point well, but concrete support is lacking. See Brindle, p. 52.

reconcile this seemingly irresolvable issue of the date of Jesus' birth. Theories based

upon this linguistic argument are artificial; they have no supporting external evidence,

and they appear to be a "last-ditch situation to save the historicity involved."[23]

Clearly, the evidence against these endeavours to harmonize the dates is strong.

I have illustrated that these attempts to reconcile the Lucan internal temporal referents

in Luke 1-3 with an external chronology have not been successful. In his well-known

work on temporal analysis, Gérard Genette speaks of a similar problem of trying to

merge internal and external chronologies. He discusses two difficulties which cause

chronological incongruity and concludes that "we cannot establish an approximately

coherent chronology except by eliminiating these two external series and adhering to the

main series..."[24] While his discussion pertains to the narrative *A la recherche du temps

perdu*, the truth of his statement is applicable to the Lucan situation. Our analysis has

shown that the Lucan internal temporal references are indeed irreconcilable with an

external chronology.

Some scholars have come to terms with this conclusion, and have endeavoured

to look beyond the "faulty" details by trying to ascertain Luke's purpose for including

the census. A spectrum of purposes have been proposed, from an apologetic function

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[23]Fitzmyer, p. 401.

[24]Gérard Genette, Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 90-91.

in light of the Jewish rebellion,[25] to a theological purpose, which is tied to the backward movement of the Christological moment, and which adorns Jesus with cosmic significance at his birth.[26] These efforts denote a significant movement away from the fallacy of merging internal and external chronologies. However, the underlying presupposition remains the same: Luke incorporated inaccurate details into his narrative account. Whereas the earlier theories attempted to correct the Lucan account, these try to ascertain the authorial motivation for including inaccurate details. But in contrast to this approach, which focuses on external reasons for including the census, I submit that the reason can be found within the Lucan narrative itself.

The census of Quirinius is part of the temporal chronology, which forms the framework for the Lucan narrative.[27] This chronology firmly grounds the beginning and end of the life and mission of Christ in contemporary Roman and Palestinian history. However, an assessment of Luke's notion of history writing and his narrative presentation of events will demonstrate that we cannot rely on the Lucan Gospel for accuracy in detail and chronology.[28]

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[25]H.R. Moehring, "The Census in Luke as an Apologetic Device," in Studies in the New Testament and Early Christian Literature, D.E. Aune, ed. Novum Testamentum Supplements 33 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972), pp. 144-160.

[26]Brown, pp. 414-415. Other considerations include Kilpatrick, who ponders the association of the census with ancestral town. See "Luke 2:4-5 and Leviticus 25:10," Zeitschrift für die Neuetestamentliche Wissenschaft 80 (1989), pp. 264-265.

[27]This will be examined in more detail in chapter 2.

[28]Fitzmyer acknowledges that Luke's notion of history-writing fails "to live up to the standards of modern historiography," and he asserts that "this is widely admitted today among many interpreters of the Lucan writings" (pp. 15-16). Despite this

The Lucan narrative is written from a particular perspective which traces the activity of God in human history. It recounts past events that were considered significant because they affected the life of humankind. The selection and presentation of these events was determined by Luke's basic presupposition that the Christ-event comprised a part of the overall divine plan according to the purpose of God (boule tou theou). This does not negate Luke's interest in historical events; rather, he used events of the past insofar as they served his interests. Luke shares this perspective with ancient Hebrew writers of history, who "[sought] through the process of narrative realization to reveal the enactment of God's purposes in historical events."[29]

The Lucan Gospel also shares some characteristics with Greco-Roman historiography.[30] This is apparent in the prologue (Lk 1:1-4), where Luke follows the common literary conventions of his time.[31] The use of formal Greco-Roman literary

acknowledgement, there are several occasions in his commentary when he attempts to offer excuses for Luke's 'misinformation'. For example, he remarks on the accuracy of Luke's understanding of the custom of purification: "What has to be recognized is that Luke, not being a Palestinian Jewish Christian, is not accurately informed about this custom of the purification of a woman after childbirth." (p. 424).

[29]Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative (New York: Basic Books, 1981), p. 33. See also Marshall, p. 56. For a short bibliography on Hebrew historiography, see David E. Aune, The New Testament in Its Literary Environment, Library of Early Christianity, vol. 8 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), pp. 114-15.

[30]Greco-Roman historiography is much broader than what follows. See Aune, pp. 112-15, for a short bibliography.

[31]The prologue has been the subject of much scholarship. For example, see W.C. van Unnik, "Once More St. Luke's Prologue," Neotestamentica 7 (1973), pp. 7-26 and Thomas Louis Brodie, "Greco-Roman Imitation of Texts as a Partial Guide to Luke's Use of Sources," in Luke-Acts: New Perspectives From the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar, Charles H. Talbert, ed. (New York: Crossroad, 1984), pp. 17-46.

language indicates that the Lucan author considered his work to form a part of world history by claiming a place for it within contemporary literature.[32] But his claim of accuracy in Lk 1:3 is not an indication of the veracity of the historical referents within the Gospel. Charles Talbert argues that "since extravagant claims of accuracy often accompanied fictitious accounts, we cannot determine Luke-Acts' historical accuracy from claims made in the preface."[33] Moreover, David E. Aune points out that since history was not part of the regular curriculum in Greco-Roman schools, most ancient historians used their rhetorical training to write history. He notes that "ancient historians freely abridged, omitted, or expanded material, made substitutions from other sources, shaped and coloured the narrative and invented minor improvements in detail."[34] This liberty with the sources reflects the limited extent to which we may rely on the historical accuracy of ancient narratives. It also indicates a preference for conveying the general sense of the sources, which makes the narrative *veri similis* (like the truth).[35]

This notion of verisimilitude is very old. Tzvetan Todorov points out that discussions of this concept can be found in Plato and Aristotle. For these early writers verisimilitude "was a relation not with reality . . .but with what most people believe to

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[32]Marshall, p. 38.

[33]Charles H. Talbert, Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel (New York: Crossroad, 1982), p. 11.

[34]Aune, p. 82.

[35]Ibid., p. 83.

be reality -- in other words, with public opinion."[36] In addition to indicating the

antiquity of this notion, Todorov also draws attention to the slight variations of meanings

attached to verisimilitude. He is cautious to distinguish the naive cognizance that equates

verisimilitude with reality, from that of Plato and Aristotle.[37] Then he establishes his

own understanding of the term, in which "verisimilitude is the mask which is assumed

by the laws of the text and which we are meant to take for a relation with reality."[38]

In other words, verisimilitude is the illusion of reality projected from the text. In

accordance with this, Lee Lemon remarks that,

> [t]he fact that the Red Queen wears a crown, for example, adds verisimilitude;
> it is an appropriate detail not because it fits into the context [Lewis] Carroll
> creates or because it satisfies expectations that the story has aroused, but merely
> because in the real world queens do wear crowns, and the Red Queen seems a
> bit more like a queen if she too has a crown.[39]

This example underscores that verisimilitude refers, not to reality, but to the use of

realistic detail.

There are many clues provided in the Lucan narrative which support this notion

of verisimilitude. Faulty details and chronology identified by historical-critics are a

flagship to the verisimilar. The census reference in Lk 2:1-2 has already been singled

out for creating chronological incongruity and technical difficulties with the other details

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[36]Tzvetan Todorov, The Poetics of Prose, Richard Howard, trans. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 82.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Ibid., p. 83.

[39]Lee Lemon, A Glossary for the Study of English (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 50.

of the narrative. Fitzmyer and Brown both assert that Luke must have confused his details, and they both point to Acts 5:37, where Luke again "shows himself inaccurate about the dating of events surrounding the census."[40] This multiple inaccuracy concerning the census as a temporal reference is a substantial clue that Luke is not including the census as reality, but rather, as realistic detail. Surely the comment of H.H. Oliver approximates this when he remarks that "Luke certainly expected his readers to have a fairly substantial idea of its point in time, just as they would be expected to understand the time of the beginning of the ministry. . ."[41]

The census is not the only problematic reference in Luke 1-3. The sixfold synchronism in 3:1-2 is also creates a referential problem. The fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar is the most specific marker for dating this sixfold chronological reference, yet this reference is far from clear, because Luke's frame of reference for calculating the reign of Tiberius is unknown, if indeed there was one. Fitzmyer outlines five possibilities,[42] none of which can establish the date with certainty. The remaining five synchronisms likewise are unable to ascertain the exact date of the appearance of

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[40]Brown, p. 413. See also p. 413, note 14, and pp. 554-555. Cf. Fitzmyer, p. 393, who takes this inaccuracy to be an indication that the census reflects Lucan composition, rather than a source.

[41]H.H. Oliver, "The Lucan Birth Stories and the Purpose of Luke-Acts," New Testament Studies 10 (1964), p. 219. A similar argument for general remembrance from R. Syme states that "two striking events in Palestian history would leave their mark in the minds of men . . .[and] either might serve as approximate dating in a society not given to exact documentation." Quoted in Brown, p. 555.

[42]Fitzmyer, p. 455.

John the Baptist, because they are vague and encompass a large period of time. Thus it is impossible to identify the exact external chronological referent.

Chronology is not the only referential problem in this sixfold reference. Among the rulers listed, Luke refers to two religious leaders of Judaism, Annas and Caiaphas, who apparently held the high-priesthood simultaneously, even though there is no evidence for such a practice. Although never explicitly stated, Fitzmyer intimates that this "historical referent" is more verisimilar than accurate. He states: "the intention of Luke is clear, as he pegs the ministry of John and Jesus roughly to a period of Palestinian history when these two high priests were powerful figures in the country."[43] Recognition of this general ambience is an admission of the realistic detail of the narrative; it does not mean that the detail corresponds to reality.

Furthermore, Luke includes in this synchronism of rulers a petty prince whose identity is unknown to scholars. According to Fitzmyer, the reference to Lysanias is either a "gross chronological blunder" to the man put to death by Marc Antony in 36 B.C.E., or a lesser known Lysanias of whom Josephus vaguely speaks, or the Lysanias mentioned in two fragmentary Greek inscriptions.[44] We will never know who Luke intended, nor his reason for including Lysanias in the list of rulers.[45] But this knowledge is not essential to understand the story Luke narrates. The general point

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[43]Ibid., p. 177.

[44]See Fitzmyer's discussion of these possibilites in Ibid., pp. 457-458.

[45]Fitzmyer uses this reference to speculate on Luke's background. Was Luke a Syrian? "Did he come from Abilene?" Ibid., p. 458.

established by this 'faulty' sixfold reference is that we are not to invite comparison of the story world with the outside, real world. The difficulty of trying to merge these two is an indication that this sixfold reference is not intended as a representation of an actual, historical chronology. Rather, it creates a general Roman and Palestinian ambience through the use of realistic detail.[46]

Chronological references are not the only clues to the verisimilar nature of the Lucan narrative. The "faulty" details in 2:22-24 are a further indication of the use of realistic detail, which provides an illusion of reality that does not necessarily conform to reality. Mary, Joseph, and Jesus go up to the Temple in order to fulfill certain obligations of the Mosaic Law. Apparently, Luke has confused and coalesced two distinct customs.[47] After Fitzmyer points out the flaws in the details, he asserts that "what is operative in vv. 22-24 is a stress on the fidelity of Mary and Joseph, as devout and pious Jews, to all the requirements of the Mosaic Law."[48] How better to illustrate fidelity to the Mosaic Law than to imbed it in realistic detail that makes specific reference to the Law?

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[46]While Fitzmyer himself acknowledges this ambiance, and states that the sixfold synchronism serves Luke's purpose to ground his narrative about Jesus in Roman history, he nevertheless questions the accuracy of Luke's information or of his interpretation. Ibid., pp. 453 and 458.

[47]Brown, pp. 447-448; Fitzmyer, pp. 420-421 and 425.

[48]Fitzmyer, p. 421.

CONCLUSION

The attempts to merge internal and external events create chronological and substantive technicalities that render the census inaccurate as a historical temporal reference for dating the birth of Jesus. Despite the obvious fallacy of the referential function of the census, various solutions have been proposed in the effort to harmonize the temporal chronology in Luke with historical fact. I have shown that these endeavours to defend the historical integrity of the Lucan gospel have not been successful.

A brief discussion of Luke's style of history writing demonstrates that the narrative features historical verisimilitude instead of historical accuracy. By this I submit that through the use of realistic detail, Luke was able to create the narrative illusion of reality. The Lucan illustrations, supplied by the chronological and technical incongruities identified by the historical-critics, yield proof of this hypothesis.

I concur with Mary Anne Tolbert, who states that "the narrative develops its own sense and coherence, if one will but look for it before rushing too quickly out of the text into history."[49] The historicity of the census cannot be established, yet it provides a realistic detail for the narrative. In addition, the census clearly functions within the narrative. As we shall see in the following chapters, the census comprises part of the setting (ch 2), it facilitates the plot (ch 3), and it contributes to the contrasting characterization of Jesus and John (ch 4).

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[49]While she states this of the Marcan text, it is no less true of the Lucan narrative. See Tolbert, p. 32.

CHAPTER TWO

As I have shown in the previous chapter, the census of Quirinius does not have a clear historical, referential function. Once we understand that the realistic details in the narrative do not necessarily represent reality, the purported textual difficulties are transcended, because they are no longer compared to anything external. "Points and periods of time are *in* the story, and are expressed *by* the discourse."[1] Hence, technical details and temporal chronology are integral to the narrative world in that they contribute to the setting, and the overall framework for the plot. According to Shimon Bar-Efrat "internal time is an invaluable constituent of the structure of the narrative."[2] A closer examination of the infancy narrative will verify Bar-Efrat's statement, and will reveal that the census as an internal temporal marker is essential to the setting of the Lucan story.

In the present chapter I will investigate the setting of the story world in Luke 1-3. Discussion of expositional material as it functions to establish the temporal parameters and the spatial context of the narrated events will lead to an analysis of the discordance

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[1]Seymour Chatman, Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 81.

[2]Bar-Efrat, Narrative Art in the Bible, JSOT Supplemental Series 70 (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1989), p. 142. While Bar-Efrat was speaking strictly about narrative in the Hebrew Bible, it is nevertheless applicable to the Lucan situation.

between story-time and narrative-time. Gérard Genette's analysis of this disparity[3] will form the basis of my discussion, in terms of the ordering and duration of events, and their frequency in the narrative. This will permit two observations. First, it will underscore the literary creativity of the evangelist by illustrating that "control of time is an important interpretive technique."[4] Second, it will highlight the importance of the census in its temporal and spatial function within the narrative, thereby authenticating the statement that "temporal references are intended as guides for the [readers] rather than accurate chronology."[5]

The setting of the Lucan story is not entirely disclosed at the outset of the narrative. As the narrative advances, additional temporal and spatial information is imparted to the reader. This is often achieved through the mode of exposition, which provides either introductory or orienting information about the story world and its characters, as well as other details necessary for understanding the story.[6] In biblical narrative, this exposition is usually conveyed with economy and in accordance with the function which it performs in the development of the narrative. Everything provided in the exposition "is essential for understanding the narrative,"[7] whether that be for

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[3]Gérard Genette, <u>Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method</u>, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1980).

[4]Tannehill, p. 10.

[5]Tolbert, p. 121.

[6]Meir Sternberg, <u>Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction</u> (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 1-34.

[7]Bar-Efrat, p. 240. See also his discussion of exposition on pages 111-121.

"supplying knowledge required for understanding the story" or "to emphasize matters of importance [and] to hint at implied meanings."[8] According to Meir Sternberg, background expositional material usually chronologically antedates the first scenic occasion,[9] although not always. When this is the case, the narration does not follow a strict chronological order, and the reader may be required to work out the proper sequence of events in the story for him/herself. Sternberg writes, "the chronological order in which events happen need not necessarily coincide with the order in which they are imparted to the reader."[10] So exposition serves in the interests of the presentation of the story world by establishing the temporal and spatial context of the episodes. At the same time exposition enables a mix of past, present and future, "because the [narrator] can arrange time with complete disregard for the laws governing physical time, [therefore] events from the past or event the future are sometimes introduced into the narrative outside their chronological order" in the story.[11]

This duality and discordance between story-time and its achronological representation in narrative-time have been long recognized by many literary theorists.[12]

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[8]Ibid., p. 117.

[9]Sternberg, p. 21.

[10]Ibid., p. 8.

[11]Bar-Efrat, p. 143.

[12]For our purposes, *story time* is the strict passage of time encompassed by the story. In contrast, *narrative time* is the story time as it is creatively plotted in the narrative. The terminology used to describe this duality often differs among literary theorists. Seymour Chatman, in Story and Discourse, prefers to make the distinction between story-time and discourse-time (p. 62). Meir Sternberg speaks of represented

The pioneering work by Gérard Genette on the relationship between story-time and narrative-time has become the foundation for subsequent temporal analysis.[13]   He exposes for analysis three categories of relations between the story-time and narrative-time.   The first is a relation of order, where the succession of events in the story is not always the same in the narrative.   The discordance between the two orderings of story and narrative Genette labels anachrony.   He distinguishes analepsis, which is a flashback or retrospection in the narrative that recalls an event that took place earlier in the story, from prolepsis, which anticipates a future event in the story.   These two types of anachrony may be either internal, that is, refering to an event within the scope of the story, or external.   Identification of anachrony in a narrative can reveal the narrator's manipulation and control of the temporal ordering of events.[14]

A study of the variable duration of events can play a central role in understanding a story.   Some events are narrated more quickly than they actually transpired, for this reason, Genette identifies four variable speeds of narration.   Salient events are most often found in narrative scenes.   Scenes, which are usually found in dialogue or monologue, approximate the pace of the story, whereas summaries cover

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time and representational time, which seems to have been derived from German theorists who made the distinction between *erzählte Zeit* and *Erzählzeit* (Expositional Modes, p. 16).   I prefer the story-narrative dichotomy, and will use the terms plotted-time and narrative-time interchangably.

[13]For others who have drawn on Genette's analysis, see Chatman, pp. 63-84, or R. Allan Culpepper, Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), pp. 53-75.

[14]Genette, pp. 33-85.

story time more rapidly. When story time is omitted, or merely glossed over, this Genette terms ellipsis. Lastly, the descriptive pause, which makes no advance in the story time, provides an extended description of a setting, character, or emotion. An investigation of these variable speeds of narration is able to expose the significant events in the narrative.[15]

The final relation between story-time and narrative-time which Genette distinguishes is frequency. By this he intends the relationship between the number of times an event takes place in the story and in the narrative. Here he again delineates four possibilities. The most straight forward is the singulative narrative. This involves the single narration of an event that transpired only once in the story. He distinguishes the repetitious from the repetitive. Whereas the former is the multiple narration of an event that happened only once, the latter is the multiple narration of an event that happened repeatedly. The last relation of frequency is the iterative. This involves the single narration of an event that took place repeatedly in the story.[16] As with duration, the frequency of a narrated event can aid the reader in distinguishing the salient events of the narrative. Thus investigation of these relations between the story-time and the narrative-time can facilitate the reader's understanding and appreciation of the narrative.

Expositional material initially draws the reader into the story world of Luke 1-3. It situates the narrative within a realistic temporal and spatial context, and provides the reader with enough information to understand the story. Luke locates the beginning of

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[15]Ibid., pp. 86-112.

[16]Ibid., pp. 114-116.

the story during the realm of Herod (en tais hemerais Herodou basileos tes Ioudaias) (Lk 1:5), and through a few more sentences of exposition he establishes the spatial context of the first episode of the story in the temple (Lk 1:9-10). Sparse details introduce the first two characters, Zechariah and Elizabeth, and reveal their piety, priestly origins, and childless background. Although this information is limited, it nevertheless has direct bearing on the following event, for it discloses the relevance of the annunciation to Zechariah.

As each new character is introduced to the reader, he or she is also located within the narrative world through expositional material. The nature of the exposition varies according to the needs of the narrative. In some instances, characters are introduced with only temporal and spatial coordinates. This type of exposition is useful for maintaining the general flow of the narrative by reestablishing the temporal and spatial coordinates in each new episode. So, for example, when the reader encounters the shepherds they are located in the fields near Bethlehem at night (Lk 2:8). This scene is linked with the preceeding episode through the association with Bethlehem, yet it maintains the flow of narrative by redefining the temporal and spatial coordinates.

A similar sequential function of exposition is visible when the reader meets the adult John the Baptist at the beginning of his ministry. As John is reintroduced, he is located in the wilderness near the Jordan during the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea, and Herod was the tetrarch of Galilee etc. (Lk 3:1-2).

The introduction of other characters may also involve background information regarding their life and character. This is necessary for establishing their role in the story, which will bear directly on their participation in the plot. Zechariah and Elizabeth were introduced with this type of exposition (see above). Two other pious Jews are introduced in a similar manner, with a limited amount of background information. Simeon is old, righteous, and devout (Lk 2:26-27); and Anna, likewise, is old and very religious in her worship, fasting, and prayer (Lk 2:36-37). This exposition is useful for establishing their role as witnesses, as well as the reliability of their witness about Jesus.[17]

The introduction of Mary and Joseph differs from the rest of the cast. While they are first introduced in Lk 1:26-27, they are reintroduced to the reader in Lk 2:1-5. New temporal and spatial coordinates are negotiated in each section, but some expositional material from Lk 1:26-27 is restated in Lk 2:1-5. Mary is initially introduced as a virgin connected to the house of David through Joseph her betrothed. This connection with the house of David is reiterated when Mary and Joseph reappear in the narrative. In addition, the spatial setting of this episode involves the city of David. Hence this emphasis on the lineage of David alerts the reader to this significant detail in the narrative.

Expositional material has several functions. First, it helps to situate the narrative within its temporal and spatial parameters, and it maintains the general flow of the narrative by reestablishing the temporal and spatial coordinates in each episode of the

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[17]The function of Simeon and Anna within the plot is discussed in chapter 3.

story. Second, exposition communicates a minimal, but sufficent amount of a character's background, which is indispensable for grasping his or her role in the narrative. In turn, this background information renders the narrative understandable. Indirectly, exposition reveals a discrepancy between story-time and narrative-time. In accordance with Sternberg's statement above, the exposition about Elizabeth and Zechariah includes some background information about them that antedates the first episode in the narrative account. They are already advanced in years and childless at the outset of the story. Similarly, when the reader encounters Simeon and Anna at the Temple (Lk 2:25-27 and Lk 2:36-37), the expositional material removes the reader from the present temporal moment in the narrative to a time in the story world that is outside the framework of the narrative, in order to explain why these two characters are at the Temple, and to establish the reliability of their witness. These two examples illustrate the temporal discordance between the narrative and story. There are more occasions of anachrony between the two temporal orderings of story and narrative outside the exposition, which can be found in the narration of the events themselves.

The narrative begins in the days of Herod, king of Judea (Lk 1:5). This realistic temporal marker creates a general context for the story, and it furnishes the narrative with a sense of verisimilitude by grounding the story in a Palestinian context under the political reign of King Herod. The first scene takes place while Zechariah is serving in the Temple (Lk 1:8-9). But the expositional material (see above) about Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth antedates this first episode, indicating that the story has already begun. Where, then, does the story begin? As we shall see below, several features of the

narrative, as well as Luke's writing style, place this narrative in continuity with the ongoing saga of the Hebrew people. But it is difficult to pinpoint the exact starting point of this continuous story of the Hebrew people. For our purposes here, we will define the starting point of the story in conjunction with the beginning of the narrative: the service of Zechariah in the temple. Hence anything that predates this point will therefore be considered external to the parameters of the story.

The first episode of the narrative accomplishes two tasks. First, the annunciation to Zechariah has the function of prolepsis as the angel Gabriel tells of the forthcoming birth of John the Baptist (Lk 1:13, cf. Lk 1:57), and provides a hint of his role in the future (Lk 1:16-17). Included in this prolepsis of John's birth is an indication of the rejoicing at his birth (Lk 1:14), and the prediction that he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from within his mother's womb (Lk 1:15). The second task this annunciation accomplishes is the establishment of continuity with the history of the Hebrew people. The annunciation to Zechariah, based on the annunciation type-scene found in the Hebrew Bible,[18] recalls other annunciations, particularly the one to Abraham and Sarah, which overcame the similar obstacles of old age and barrenness (Genesis 18:1-15).

The subsequent episode (Lk 1:26-38) begins with a new spatial and temporal context. The new temporal marker refers to Elizabeth's gestational period, so the current episode is linked to the same temporal framework. As with the annunciation to

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[18]For a more comprehensive treatment of the annunciation type-scene in the Hebrew Bible, see Robert Alter, "How Convention Helps us Read," in Prooftexts 3 (1983), pp. 115-130. See also Brown, pp. 155-159 and 292-298.

Zechariah, this annunciation to Mary also functions analeptically and proleptically. It recalls by means of analepsis the annunciation to Zechariah, as well as the annunciations of the Hebrew Bible that preserve memories of God's intervention. Hence the proleptic anticipation of Jesus' birth and future role are placed in continuity with the history of the Hebrew people.

This pattern of combining analepsis and prolepsis is also found in the canticles. Mary's Magnificat (Lk 1:46-55) is embedded in an episode linked with the preceeding ones through the general connective, en tais tautais (1:39). Her song of praise is rich in allusions to past and future events. Through analepsis, she recalls Abraham, one of the pillars of the Hebrew faith, who marks a moment in the salvific past, when God helped his people (Lk 1:55). God's intervention in the past will continue into the future, and the Magnificat anticipates a time in the story outside the present narrative when generations will call her blessed (Lk 1:48b), and also times of social upheaval (Lk 1:51-53).

In a similar fashion to the Magnificat, both the Benedictus (Lk 1: 68-79), and the Nunc Dimitus (Lk 2:29-32) are rich in allusions to past and future events and therefore they integrate both analepsis and prolepsis. In the Benedictus, Zechariah celebrates God's act of redemption for his people (Lk 1:68). He addresses some words to John that preview his future role (Lk 1:76-79) and at the same time recall the words of the angel regarding John's role (Lk 1:16-17). Thus at the same moment these words function both proleptically and analeptically. Furthermore, Zechariah anticipates the one from the house of David (Lk 1:69b), who will bring salvation from enemies (Lk 1:69a,

71). This prolepsis is confirmed by analepsis that recalls the words of the prophets (Lk 1:70), and the covenant with Abraham (Lk 1:72-73). Again, through analepsis, continuity is ensured between the unfolding events and past events in the history of the Hebrew people.

Simeon's canticle likewise draws attention to the narrator's control of time. For just as the potter fashions the clay, so the Lucan narrator moulds the narrative to integrate allusions both to the past and future.[19] The first phrase of the Nunc Dimitus recalls the promise made to Simeon sometime prior to the beginning of the story, of which the reader learns in the expositional material about Simeon (Lk 2:26). At the same time, this external analepsis, which originally was a prolepsis, now finds fulfillment, and having seen with his own eyes the salvation of the Lord, Simeon no longer anticipates the salvation of the Lord. Accordingly, with the tone of prophecy, Simeon speaks proleptically of the impact and extent of the salvation, that it will be "a light for revelation to the Gentiles" (Lk 2:32).[20]

The chronicling of Elizabeth's gestational period, which has been used to mark the continuity between the first few episodes, culminates with the birth of John (Lk 1:57). This completes the earlier prolepsis regarding his birth (Lk 1:13). The scene focuses on the naming of John. Again, earlier prolepses find completion in this episode. Neighbours and family rejoice at the birth (Lk 1:58, cf. 1:14), and the sign, which

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[19]Bar-Efrat uses the image of the potter to illustrate his point about the author's manipulation of time. See Bar-Efrat, p. 142.

[20]In a second oracle, Simeon's words function as prolepsis only. He anticipates the division that will result from Jesus (Lk 2:34-35).

Zechariah received as proof of the annunciation, is finally removed (Lk 1:64, cf. 1:20, 22). But this temporal chronology, which has flowed sequentially through Elizabeth's gestational period, is interrupted in 1:80. The verse anticipates, through prolepsis, the day of John's "manifestation to Israel" (Lk 1:80) thereby bringing this first strand of the story to a temporary close.

The John-strand of the narrative, suspended for fifty-two verses, recommences at the beginning of the third chapter. New temporal and spatial coordinates establish the context in which John's manifestation to Israel takes place. A realistic reference to the contempory secular and religious rulers of Roman and Palestinian history builds on the previous temporal indicators by indicating how much time has elapsed. A sense of reality is given to this new section by relating the narrative to human history, and this verisimilous synchronism of rulers indicates a change in the general political situation in which the story claims to take place. The spatial location of the scene is the wilderness in the region about the Jordan. It is in this temporal and spatial context that John begins his ministry of preparing the way.

Despite the establishment of a new temporal marker, independent of the temporal framework developed thus far, continuity with the foregoing narrative is nevertheless preserved through the links to the earlier prolepses regarding John's role. In its position in the current episode, the words of the quoted prophecy of Isaiah (Lk 3:4-6) recall both the message of Gabriel and the words of Zechariah concerning the role of John. The quoted prophecy also reaches back analeptically to the moment of its inscription, which

anticipated the role of John at some point in the future.[21] That anticipated moment now finds completion, hence the Isaiah prophecy also places John's role in continuity with the history of the Hebrew people. After a recorded sample of John's ministry (Lk 3:7-18), this narrative strand is permanently closed. Through a proleptic reference the reader learns of John's demise. This prolepsis has a dual function within the narrative: first, it informs the reader what will take place, in the future, as far as John is concerned, and second, it neatly concludes any strand of the gospel that has focused on John. Therefore the intertwinning between Jesus' and John's ministry ends here. The next scene and the remainder of the Lukan gospel focuses on Jesus.

After the temporal leap concerning the manifestation of John in Lk 1:80, the Jesus strand of the narrative recommences in Lk 2:1. Repetition of the temporal words en tais hemerais ekeinais, found also in Lk 1:39,[22] assists in preserving the flow of the narrative.[23] But the temporal break has interrupted the continuum established in chapter one, so new temporal coordinates help to reestablish the point in time. Instead of simply relying on the vague connective en tais hemerais ekeinais, the narrator opts for a new, realistic temporal marker that provides the narrative with an illusion of reality. The

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[21]Whether this Isaian prophecy actually anticipated John is not certain. What must be realized is that this is Luke's interpretation of this prophecy from Isaiah. Its present position and function in the narrative enables its identification as an example of both prolepsis and analepsis.

[22]There is a slight variation in Lk 1:39 that uses tautais instead of ekeinais.

[23]Continuity in the narrative is also achieved through the repetition of some expositional material regarding Mary and Joseph. The reader is reminded of the foregoing circumstances of the conception of Jesus, which preserves the continuum, despite the incongruity caused in Lk 1:80.

choice of this verisimilar reference, the census of Quirinius, is significant for several reasons, but for now only its temporal function will be discussed.[24]

In this new episode, the temporal framework, initially connected to the preceding episodes by the repetition of a vague connective, is marked by the census reference. The time period involved is during the reign of Caesar Augustus, and more specifically, during the enrollment he ordered. A narrative aside, with the nature of expositional material, assists the reader to identify which enrollment it was, by linking it to the governorship of Quirinius (Lk 2:2).[25] In this way, the reference to the census indicates a temporal boundary of the story world, while at the same time effecting a geographical movement within the narrative.

Eight days after the birth, Jesus is circumcised and named according to the name which the angel gave him before he was conceived (Lk 2:21, cf. Lk 1:31). A general sense of forward flowing time is maintained as the purification rite follows, at the proper time, after the circumcision. Mary, Joseph and Jesus go up to Jerusalem to fulfill this ritual obligaion, which is in accordance with the law of Moses (Lk 2:22). The exact law intended is clarified for the reader through a narrative aside (Lk 2:23, 24b).[26] At this point the temporal continuum is suspended to introduce Simeon, and provide some

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[24]This reference will be used in the chapter on plot to show how the narrator brings about the fulfillment of the prediction regarding Jesus's birth. It will also be used in the final chapter as an example of the contrasting characterization of John and Jesus.

[25]Steven M. Sheeley classifies this aside under the category of "material necessary to understand the story," and more specifically as an identification. See Narrative Asides in Luke-Acts, JSNT Supplemental Series 72 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), pp. 102-103.

[26]Ibid., pp. 98-100, 116-117.

expositional material about his background. Most of this material is analeptic in nature. Simeon is old, and he has been waiting for the consolation of Israel (Lk 2:25). Sometime in the past, prior to the beginning of the present story, Simeon was promised that "he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (Lk 2:26). This promise has the character of prolepsis, in that it anticipates an event in the future; but in its present location in the narrative, it is an example of analepsis, because this promise was made to Simeon prior to the beginning of the narrative.

The temporal continuum resumes in 2:27 after the short expositional material, and the subsequent episode is connected to where we left off by way of spatial location. The episode takes place in the Temple. Simeon encounters Jesus and offers praise to God for revealing his salvation to him. Directly following Simeon's oracles, another new character is introduced, and again, the temporal continuum is suspended momentarily in order that Anna's background can be set forth in expositional material (Lk 2:36-37). After her testimony regarding Jesus, the narrative reverts back to its focus on Mary, Joseph and Jesus at the Temple, who complete their ritual and return to Nazareth.

At this point in the narrative a summary of Jesus' growth maintains the flow of the narrative. Unlike the summary of John, this does not present a leap in the temporal continuum. The narrative focus remains with the Jesus-strand, and time continues to be plotted and a yearly event is singled out one year when Jesus was twelve

years old.[27] At the conclusion of this episode, a second summary of growth concludes Jesus' youthhood. The narrative strand concerning Jesus is now suspended until the reintroduction of John the Baptist (Lk 3:1-3), and narration of his demise (Lk 3:19-20) have been communicated to the reader.

When the Jesus strand of the story is finally revived, it is in relation to the baptism offered by John (Lk 3:21-22).[28] There are no significant temporal markings at the inauguration of Jesus' public ministry; the narrator only remarks that Jesus begins his ministry at the age of about thirty (Lk 3:23). Without any other temporal marker, it is difficult to recover the precise chronology of Jesus' reported baptism, the demise of John the Baptist, and the advent of Jesus' ministry. Yet, this chronological ambiguity, tempered by the concern to separate distinctly the two strands of the story, exposes the narrator's control of the ordering of events.

The relation of ordering is not the only type of discordance between story and narrative time used by the Lucan narrator. There are one hundred and seventy verses in the section of Luke under investigation (1:5-3:38). The span of time covered in these verses is about thirty-one years.[29] But not all moments of the story are narrated at the

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[27]The significance of this event will be discussed further in the following chapter on the development of plot.

[28]The Lucan text is not clear on this point. However, there has not been any mention of another character giving baptism. The implied reader will fill in this gap and relate the emergence of the adult Jesus to the baptism offered by John.

[29]This is an estimate based on the temporal chronology indicated by the narrative itself. In Lk 3:23 the narrator indicates that Jesus was about thirty. But the narrative begins at least fifteen months prior to his birth, which is narrated in Lk 2:6-7. The fifteen months is the total sum of Mary's gestational period, plus the six months

same pace in the narrative. In fact, fourteen and a half verses are used for a descriptive

pause to trace the genealogy of Jesus (Lk 3:23b-38). That leaves one hundred, fifty-five

and a half verses to narrate thirty-one years of the story. For this reason, some of the

story time is ellipsed altogther from the narrative. The most noticeable example of

ellipsis is the conspicuously absent childhood and pre-ministry years of both Jesus and

John, which comprise about twenty-nine or thirty years. The reader is aware of these

ellipsed years because the narrative envelops the glossed-over period with the narration

of the births on one side, and on the other side, the beginning of their respective

ministries.[30] Other periods of time are explicitly glossed over as well. For example,

the first six months of Elizabeth's pregnancy are ellipsed from the narrative, as are the

last months of Mary's pregnancy between Lk 1:56 and the birth in Lk 2:6-7. These

explicit ellipses mark the passage of time that is important for the continuing flow of the

narrative, while omitting large periods of the story which are irrelevant for the narrative.

Summaries are similar to ellipses, in that they also function to preserve the flow of the

narrative. Consider the following examples. After the annunciation to Zechariah, the

duration of the remainder of his temple service is condensed with the indefinite summary

"when his time of service was ended he went home" (Lk 1:23). In a like manner, the

duration of Mary's visit with Elizabeth is compacted into the definite summary "Mary

remained with her about three months, and returned to her home" (Lk 1:56). These

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belonging to Elizabeth's gestational period (Lk 1:24, 26). When these two are added
together the result is about thirty one years.

[30]There is an exception, of course, in Lk 2:42-51 when the reader momentarily
meets Jesus as a twelve year old.

narrative summaries of the story time conclude the episodes in which they are situated, and they serve as transition so that another episode may take place. Accordingly, these summary statements, both definite and indefinite, contribute to the forward movement of the narrative.[31]

The census (Lk 2:1-2) also contributes to the movement of the narrative, because it assists in resuming the flow of the story after the temporal gap caused by Lk 1:80. In the narrative, the circumstances of the census are narrated in summary, and this has direct relevance on the birth of Jesus because the census is the machinery by which the birth may take place in Bethlehem, the city of David. However, as an event itself, the census is insignificant. Details of the event alluded to by this reference are ellipsed from the narrative. The reader never learns of the exact process of enrolment, nor whether Mary and Joseph actually fulfilled the obligation to enrol. Hence the narrative duration of the census reveals that its significance resides not in the event, but in its role as a temporal marker and the geographical move it effected.

Most of the remaining narrated events in Luke 1-3 also fall under the category of summary. In addition to the function of transition, or narrative momentum, summaries in Luke 1-3 often characterize a period of time. This is particularly apparent in the expositional material which covers a large period of a character's background with a minimal amount of words. This material has limited significance in the narrative outside its relation to the action which follows. All expositional summaries are followed

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[31]Further examples of this can be found in 1:80, 2:39, 2:40, 2:51, 2:52, and 3:18.

by an event which is narrated at the pace of a scene.[32] This oscillation between summary and scene exposes the relevance of the exposition. For example, the description of Elizabeth as an old, barren woman (Lk 1:7) accentuates the intervention of God in the annunciation to Zechariah (Lk 1:11-20), for both characteristics are obstacles to her ability to bear children. Similarly, the limited exposition concerning Simeon (Lk 2:25-26) establishes the significance of the following event in which he witnesses to the salvation of the Lord (2:29-32).[33]

The narration of these two events: the annunciation of Zechariah, and the witness of Simeon, approximate their duration in the story. Thus they are classified as scenes. The pace of the annunciation to Zechariah slows down to recount the exchange of dialogue between the angel and Zechariah. This scene is instrumental, because it is the first scene in the narrative, and it provides the plot with substance, by highlighting the intervention of God in human affairs.[34] The oracles of Simeon, also a narrative scene, share a similar function of contributing to the plot of the narrative through the witness to the salvation of the Lord.

Two events that the reader might expect would be narrated in detail are the births of John and Jesus. Surprisingly, these are conveyed with scarcely any detail. The

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[32]There is one exception. The summary about Anna's background (Lk 2:36-37) is followed by a summary of her words and action after meeting the child Jesus (Lk 2:38).

[33]Further examples of the oscillation between expositional-summary and narrative-scene include Lk 1:26-27 and Lk 1:28-38; Lk 2:8 and 2:9-14.

[34]Plot will be developed in more detail in chapter three.

birth of John, although predicted in the annunciation scene to Zechariah, is reported in a summary. The narrative slows down, instead, to recount what transpired on the eighth day after John's birth, the focal point of which is the naming of John (Lk 1:59-63). This event is narrated at the pace of a scene. The reported dialogue in this scene confers substance to the plot of the narrative. It functions to recall the annunciation to Zechariah, and confirms that this birth is the result of the intervention of God.

In a similar fashion, the actual event of Jesus' birth is summarized in the narrative. Again, it is the subsequent episode which is narrated at scene length. The annunciation to the shepherds (Lk 2:9-14) attests both the birth of Jesus and the salvation that he brings. This too, adds substance to the plot, for it underscores the importance of that birth.

The identification of the varied narrative speeds enables the reader to discern which events are the most significant in the narrative. Scenes narrate the major details of the story and develop the plot. They are connected to one another through either summaries or explicit ellipses, and the vascillation between these narrative speeds adds momentum to the narrative.

The variable frequency with which an event can be narrated is an indispensable tool of the narrator. For the most part, the Lucan narrative in chapters 1-3 involves the singulative form of narration. For example, each narrated canticle, while similar in content, represents a single event that happens only once in the narrative. Likewise, even though they are based on a common convention, each annunciation is a distinct, single event, which involves three different characters.

Although the singulative is the norm, there is evidence of the iterative and repetitious forms of narration in the section we have been investigating. The yearly visit to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast is narrated only once (Lk 2:41). The fact that this recurring event is narrated only once exposes its iterative character. The importance of this iterative event is twofold. First, it establishes the context for the following scene, which singles out one of these yearly visits to Jerusalem, because it is a significant moment in the childhood of Jesus, worthy of narration. Second, it contributes to the temporal continuum, for although eleven years are ellipsed from the time of Jesus' birth and purification to this moment, the iterative event, by virtue of its yearly occurence, preserves the momentum of the narrative.

A repetitious event is the reverse of an iterative event. The iterative narrates once an event which happens often. In contrast, repetitious narration narrates more than once an event that occurs only once in the narrative. The birth of Jesus is an example of a repetitious event. Jesus is born only once, but the event is announced three times. First the narrator summarizes the birth (Lk 2:6-7). Then the angelic annunciation to the shepherds heralds the birth of Jesus (Lk 2:10-12). The shepherds too, after seeing the baby, announce the birth of Jesus (Lk 2:17). This threefold emphasis on the birth of Jesus does nothing less than convey the ultimate significance of that birth.

Despite the sporadic examples in Luke 1-3, variation in narrative frequency can prove useful for the narrator. It allows the narrator to expose important events, as well as preserve the temporal continuum.

CONCLUSION

The application of Genette's categories of temporal analysis to Luke 1-3 reveals that the Lucan narrator is not bound by the limits of objective, physical time. Rather, the narrator fashions time according to the needs of the narrative in order to demonstrate certain points. The precise division between past, present, and future is obscured through the narrative anachronies which feature a constant forward and backward movement in the story. The rich allusions to previous and coming events are fused together to indicate the continuity between the previous moments of salvation in Hebrew history, recalled through analepsis, and the future events of salvation previewed through prolepsis.

Discussion of the ordering of events exposes a temporal framework that is carefully fashioned. The examples of analepsis and prolepsis demonstrate the creativity of the narrator, and expose his control of time. Furthermore, temporal and spatial coordinates are an essential component of the narrative setting, for they locate the episodes within the story, and they signify each new section of the narrative. The continuity of the narrative is maintained through the plotting of time in a coherent fashion. In most instances, the temporal and spatial markers function to sustain the flow of the narrative by linking the episodes to the previous ones. However, when the temporal continuum is temporarily suspended, new temporal coordinates function to resume the interrupted flow. In these instances, continuity is preserved through the repetition of detail.

A study of the duration and frequency of events identifies the pivotal events of the narrative. Scenes and repetitious events expose the central events of the narrative, and provide the plot with substance. Less significant events supply the cohesive bond between episodes, thereby giving the narrative momentum. The census accomplishes both of these. It is a carefully choosen temporal marker that serves more than one narrative purpose. In this chapter we have seen that the census is integral to the setting of the narrative. It resumes the flow of the narrative after the continuum is suspended in Lk 1:80, and it provides the narrative with momentum. In addition, the census effects a spatial change through geographical relocation. In the following chapter we will investigate another function of the census, namely its participation in the development of the narrative's plot.

CHAPTER THREE

The temporal and spatial setting of the Lucan infancy narrative, described in the previous chapter, contributes to the overall progression of plot, which is important for understanding the function of the census within the story. Through the sequential arrangement of events, their variable duration, and the frequency with which they are narrated, certain events are singled out as significant for, and central to the plot. The census of Quirinius is an example of such an event. While the census event itself is of little significance, its position within the narrative is paramount for advancing the plot. By tracing the development of the plot in Luke 1-3, the present chapter will investigate the contribution of the census to the development of the plot.

Before we can move into a discussion of the plot of Luke 1-3, it is important to establish a preliminary understanding of plot. According to Seymour Chatman, the function of plot is "to emphasize or de-emphasize certain story events, to interpret some and to leave others to inference,.to focus on this or that aspect of an event or character." [1] Plot may also raise expectations about the future course of events in the narrative.[2]

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[1]Chatman, p. 43.

[2]M.H. Abrams, <u>A Glossary of Literary Terms</u>, 3rd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1957), p. 128.

What is meant by this term, "plot"? Literary theorists have variously defined the concept of plot. A rudimentary understanding from Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, considers plot to be an "outline of events." They define plot as "the dynamic, sequential element in narrative literature."[3] The principle of causation provides the relation between narrated events, and it serves to distinguish plot from a sequential list of events. The well-known example from E.M. Forster demonstrates this notion of causation. He makes the distinction between two sequential events, "the king died, and then the queen died," and plot, "the king died, and then the queen died of grief." The latter clearly demonstrates a causal relation between the two events.[4] M.H. Abrams' definition of plot includes one further aspect that cannot be overlooked. He recognizes that "the plot in a dramatic or narrative work is the structure of its actions, as these are ordered and rendered toward achieving particular emotional and artistic effects."[5] From these definitions three central characteristics of plot emerge: sequence, causation, and affective power of narrative.

Biblical scholars have adopted this multifaceted understanding of plot, and have emphasized one or more of these central characteristics in their own discussion of plot.

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[3]Robert Scholes and Robert Kellog, The Nature of Narrative (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 12 and 207.

[4]E.M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (Edward Arnold, 1927; Penguin Books, 1972), p. 93. Chatman modifies our understanding of causation, arguing that causation does not always need to be explicit. The causation may be implicit, with the reader supplying the connective as she reads. See Chatman, pp. 45-46.

[5]Abrams, p. 127. See also Lemon, p. 40 and Kieran Egan, "What is Plot?" New Literary History 9 (1977-78), p. 470.

Bar-Efrat, for example, recognizes the causality of plot, but he emphasizes the organization of events within a temporal sequence, and the affective power of the narrative. He states, "the plot serves to organize events in such a way as to arouse the reader's interest and emotional involvement, while at the same time imbuing the events with meaning."[6] Mark Allen Powell, on the other hand, acknowledges the importance of sequence by discussing the categories of Genette's analysis (order, duration, frequency) as bearing on plot, but he stresses the necessity of causation for joining events in a meaningful fashion.[7] Despite these different emphases, biblical scholars recognize that the arrangement of events is paramount to the progression of plot. Frank Matera maintains that time and causality are major categories for organizing events into plot.[8] R. Alan Culpepper states that "the plot interprets events by placing them in a sequence, a context, a narrative world, which defines their meaning."[9] In a similar fashion Jack Dean Kingsbury remarks that "the plot of a story has to do with the way in which the author arranges the events."[10]

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[6]Bar-Efrat, p. 93.

[7]Powell, What is Narrative Criticism? Guides to Biblical Scholarship (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), p. 40.

[8]Frank J. Matera, "The Plot of Matthew's Gospel," in Catholic Bibilical Quarterly 49 (1987), pp. 235-36.

[9]Culpepper, p. 85.

[10]Conflict in Luke: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), p. 34. He makes a similar comment in Matthew as Story, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), p. 3: "To create 'plot' the author arranges the events of a story in a particular temporal and causal sequence so as to elict from the reader some desired response."

In addition to the arrangement of events, many biblical scholars consider the theme of conflict to be central to plot in the gospel narratives. For example, Powell comments that "even a cursory reading of the Gospels reveals how pervasive the theme of conflict is in these narratives."[11] Kingsbury asserts that "conflict is central to the plot of Matthew,"[12] and he has devoted two recent works to study conflict in Mark and Luke.[13] According to David Rhoads and Donald Michie, "conflict is the heart of most stories. Without conflict, most stories would only be a sequence of events strung together without tension or suspense or struggle on the part of the characters."[14] But despite this emphasis, not all plots necessarily deal with conflict. Abrams clearly states in his treatment of plot that "many, but far from all, plots deal with a conflict."[15] Although Kingsbury contends that conflict pervades the Gospel of Luke, it is not the basis of plot in the first section of the Lucan narrative. Apart from the notion of reversal in Mary's Magnificat (Lk 1:52-53), which emerges later in the Lucan narrative, and the warning of future conflict in Simeon's oracles (Lk 2:29-35), there is not much evidence of conflict in Luke 1-3. This does not mean that this section is plotless because conflict is not central; rather, the notion of fulfillment is more central to the plot in this section.

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[11]Powell, p. 43.

[12]Kingsbury, Matthew as Story, p. 3.

[13]Conflict in Luke and Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989).

[14]Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), p. 73.

[15]Abrams, p. 128.

The Lucan narrative features episodes, characteristic of the gospel narratives in general, which are related. But causation, understood by literary theorists and some biblical scholars as providing the connection between events, is not always apparent in the Lucan narrative. Bar-Efrat recognizes that some biblical narrative is connected on the basis of chronology rather than causality.[16] In the previous chapter we saw how maintenance of the temporal sequence provides cohesiveness to the narrative. To this we can add the insight of Mary Anne Tolbert who states that "the episodic epic plot pattern uses the motif of journey to tie together separate encounters and adventures. Episodes are not necessarily connected to one another by cause and effect, . . .rather, they often cluster in sets defined by the needs of repetition or thematic expression."[17] So, the arrangement of events in the narrative is significant for the development of plot, because they are ordered within a particular temporal and causal sequence. The narrator's manipulation of time can have a direct bearing on the advancement of plot. Discrepancies in the order, duration, and frequency of events highlight important aspects of the plot, and provide substance for the plot.

What, then, is the plot of Luke 1-3? The narrative provides clues to the nature of the plot in four ways. Clues are found at both the beginning and ending of the narrative, in material that is repeated, and in the designated tasks of the characters.[18] If we look at each of these, we will be able to ascertain the plot of Luke 1-3.

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[16]Bar-Efrat, p. 136.

[17]Tolbert, p. 74.

[18]See Culpepper, p. 87. In his list he also includes the nature of conflict.

The plot develops in conjunction with Luke's notion of religious history-writing, which traces the salvific activity of God in human history.[19] As the narrative unfolds, the plot moves from prediction to fulfillment, which accords with the purpose of God (boule tou theou).[20] The narrator appears to be "at pains. . .to depict God as undertaking a new action in the history of salvation."[21] This manifests itself at the beginning of the narrative with two predictions about the births of John and Jesus. But these births are not ordinary. They are generated by God's plan of salvation for humanity. In both instances, the messages are delivered by the angel Gabriel, an agent of God, to Zechariah and Mary respectively. The presence of the same angel in these different annunciations emphasizes the unity of God's salvific plan, which has multiple strands, involving both John and Jesus. Through the use of the common annunciation type-scene, found in the Hebrew scriptures,[22] a connection with the ongoing participation of God in the salvation of humankind is established. Since these annunciations recall similar occasions of God's intervention in the Hebrew Bible, these predictions of birth are placed "in continuity with the births of famous figures in the

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[19]See Chapter 1, p. 20.

[20]According to Tannehill, this concept is the feature which unifies the narrative of Luke-Acts. See Narrative Unity, p. xiii. Fitzmyer also discusses the boule tou theou. He states that "Luke alludes at times to a fundatmental divine 'plan' for the salvation of human beings which is being realized in the activity of Jesus. . . .It is explicitly mentioned in Luke 7:30 as 'God's design' (he boule tou theou)" Fitzmyer, p. 179.

[21]Kingsbury, Conflict in Luke, p. 37.

[22]See Chapter 2, note 18, p. 37.

salvific history of Israel."[23] Thus this narrative beginning exposes the previous involvement of God in human salvation, and it intimates that the present narrative will unfold according to the purpose of God (boule tou theou).

The indicated roles of John and Jesus are clearly set out as belonging to the boule tou theou. Gabriel's annunciation to Zechariah includes several clues to the role of John in God's plan of salvation. The first is in the given name, Yohanan, which means 'Yahweh has shown favour.' This name emphasizes God's intervention in a childless situation, and, "like other heaven-imposed names,. . .it implies that the child will have a role in the drama of God's salvation. . ."[24] The angel Gabriel also indicates that John will be instrumental in turning "many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God" (1:16) Lastly, John is depicted as a forerunner, the one who will go before and prepare the way (1:17).[25] Zechariah picks up on this notion of forerunner in his song of praise, and he describes the future role of John as the "prophet of the Most High" (1:76). Further into the narrative the reader learns that this role was foretold by the prophet Isaiah (3:4-6). This threefold emphasis underscores both the nature of John's role as a forerunner, and its place in the salvific plan of God.

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[23]Brown, p. 269. He discusses the similiarities between the situation of Zechariah and Elizabeth and the two sets of Biblical characters, Abraham and Sarah (Gen 17:1-19; 18:1-15) and Elkanah and Hannah (1 Sam 1:1-20).

[24]Fitzmyer, p. 325. He also draws attention to the formula, "you shall call his name John", as an Old Testament expression, which signifies the continuity between the Hebrew past and the present expressed in the Lucan text.

[25]Many have launched a discussion of the eschatological Elijha from this verse. See Fitzmyer, p. 327 and Brown, pp. 75ff.

As with John, the narrator depicts Jesus' role in terms of the <u>boule tou theou</u>. Again, a heaven-given name (Lk 1:31b) signifies that Jesus will have a role in the salvation of God.[26] Gabriel's message to Mary identifies the future destiny and role of Jesus. He "will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever;" (Lk 1:32-33). Mary's hymn of praise (Lk 1:46-55), among other things, signifies the continuity between the salvation represented with the birth, life, and career of Jesus and the covenant made by God with Abraham (Lk 1:55). Zechariah's hymn of praise also reinforces the stress on continuity with the covenant of Abraham, which is again mentioned in Lk 1:72b-73 at the conclusion of his hymn of praise to God for raising up "a horn of salvation" from the house of David (Lk 1:69). The role of Jesus, then, foretold by the angel Gabriel, is not a break from things of the past, but must be seen in terms of the continuing <u>boule tou theou</u> in Hebrew history.

Certain themes are repeated often in Luke 1-3. The repetition highlights their centrality in the <u>boule tou thoeu</u> and establishes the primacy of Jesus' role. The repeated emphasis on the Davidic lineage of Jesus (Lk 1:27; 2:4c), and his birth in the city of David (Lk 2:4a,6) draws attention to the role ascribed to Jesus by the angel in Lk 1:32-33. In Lk 1:69 Zechariah refers to Jesus as the "horn of salvation" from the house of David, who will bring salvation from their enemies (Lk 1:71). He further indicates that John's role will be to make known knowledge of this new salvation (Lk 1:77), which is also found in the prophecy of Isaiah (Lk 3:6). To the shepherds the angel announces that

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[26]Fitzmyer points out the two possible roots of this name (p. 347).

a Saviour has been born in the city of David (Lk 2:11), and this same 'saviour' represents the salvation for which Simeon was waiting (Lk 2:30). The stress on the Davidic connection of Jesus, together with the repetition of the concept of salvation serves to firmly establish his role within the boule tou theou. Jesus' role is salvific; he is the expected Davidic ruler, the messiah, and as such, he is the primary focus of God's plan of salvation for humanity.

The ending of this section of the narrative (Luke 1-3) confirms that events will continue to unfold according to the boule tou theou. The reader learns of the advent of John's ministry in Luke 3. The entire episode (Lk 3:1-18) is dominated by the notion of fulfillment of this aspect of God's plan. John is reintroduced to the reader as the result of a "call" from God. This "call" resembles that of other prophetic figures,[27] thereby drawing a connection with the ongoing history of the Hebrew people. John is presented as the one called by God to prepare for the imminent salvation, which fulfills the earlier depiction of his role (Lk 1:17, and 1:76). Even the quotation from Isaiah emphasizes the role of John in the boule tou theou; it confirms that John is the fulfillment of this Isaian prophecy regarding God's plan for human salvation. This example from the ending of Luke 1-3 demonstrates that the plot, which is concerned with the boule tou theou, unravels through fulfillment.

The plot of Luke 1-3 is concerned with the purpose of God in human salvation, and has a dual focus that is creatively interwoven. The two narrative strands progress from the initial predictions about the forthcoming births of Jesus and John, who will have

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[27]Ibid., p. 458.

a role in implementing God's plan of salvation for humanity. The <u>boule tou theou</u> is advanced as each prediction is realized, and this fulfillment contributes to the forward movement of the plot.

Although interwoven, events of the two narrative strands develop independently. Despite this independence, they are nevertheless connected because they belong to a single plot which reveals the purpose of God in human salvation. The seemingly unrelated episodes intersect primarily through the temporal framework.[28] It provides a bond between events by placing them within a temporal sequence. For example, the references to the months of Elizabeth's pregnancy (i.e. Lk 1:24; 1:26; 1:56; and 1:57) helps to keep the narrative flowing; it identifies the passage of time, and it provides the narrative with a coherence by connecting otherwise unrelated episodes. The annunciation to Mary is therefore connected to the same temporal framework, which reinforces the temporal relationship between the two strands of the story.

The plot, concerned with the plan of God, is realized through fulfillment. The first narrative example of fulfillment is the proof of annunciation to Zechariah. He becomes unable to speak, just as Gabriel foretold. This proof of the annunciation serves to emphasize that this annunciation is an accordance with the <u>boule tou theou</u>. For Mary, her proof of annunciation is the pregnancy of her kinswoman, Elizabeth. This confirms that both Mary's and Elizabeth's conceptions are a part of the plan of God in human salvation.

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[28]The motif of journey also links episodes together. For example, when Zechariah has finished his service at the temple, he returns home (Lk 1:23) in order that Gabriel's prediction regarding Elizabeth may take place (Lk 1:24).

The first significant fulfillment takes place when Mary visits Elizabeth.[29] Through both the temporal framework with its loose connective en tais hemerais (Lk 1:39) and the motif of journey, the two strands of the story intersect. Details from the annunciations are used to advance the plot of the narrative. The central event during this visitation is the occasion by which Elizabeth learns of Mary's pregnancy. John leaps prophetically within Elizabeth's womb when Mary enters. This is in fulfillment of what Gabriel said of the child, "he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb." (Lk 1:15b) Through this event then, Elizabeth learns from heaven (just as Mary learned about Elizabeth in Lk 1:36) that Mary is the "mother of [her] Lord." (Lk 1:43) In addition, this episode confirms Mary's conception to both the reader and Mary. Hence, in reaction to the proof of her conception, Mary offers a song of praise to God, in recognition that "he has chosen her to be the mother of an instrument of [God's] salvific intervention in Israeli history."[30] This episode, then, advances the plot by confirming that both conceptions have taken place, as they were predicted. It also underscores the fact that God is the "driving" force behind these conceptions, for they are according to His plan.

At the end of the gestational period, Elizabeth gives birth to John. In this episode the substance of the annunciation to Zechariah is realized. The child is born (Lk 1:57); neighbours and kinsfolk rejoice (Lk 1:58); and Zechariah is able to speak again

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[29]Since the "proof of annunciation" to both Zechariah and Mary forms a part of the annunciation type-scene, I do not consider these initial fulfillments to be as significant as what follows.

[30]Fitzmyer, p. 369.

(Lk 1:64). All of this is in conjuction with the words of Gabriel: ". . .your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, . . .and many will rejoice at his birth;" (Lk 1:13, 14) and ". . .you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things come to pass." (Lk 1:20).

Although the birth of John fulfills the prediction, it is narrated with sparse details. Instead, the focus of Luke 1:57-66 is on the naming of John. The repetition of the name by both mother and father highlights the "favour of God" in this birth, thereby demonstrating the intervention of God in the birth. Friends and family gathered for the circumcision and naming only realize God's intervention in the birth of John when the condition of being deaf and dumb is removed from Zechariah. "Thus God has intervened twice."[31] He has removed Elizabeth's barrenness, and cured Zechariah's deafness and dumbness. This revelation causes friends and family to raise questions regarding the future. Their question, "what then will this child be?" (Lk 1:66) keeps the plot moving.

It is notable that Zechariah's first reported words are praise to God; as with Mary, Zechariah offers his praise to God, acknowledging that what has come to pass was at the instigation of the hand of the Lord. Included in his song are the themes of salvation (1:69,77), and the notion of deliverance (1:71,74). In response to the questions of the friends and family, Zechariah provides an indication of the future role of John (1:76-79).

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[31]Ibid., p. 375.

This pattern of fulfillment, which advances the plot, emerges early in the narrative, and is clear by the end of Luke chapter one. It is anticipated, therefore, that the angelic prediction to Mary will also be fulfilled. True to the pattern, Jesus is born in Lk 2:6-7. As it happens though, there is a surprise in the plot. Prior to the narration of the birth there is an unforeseen twist in the events. Caesar Augustus orders a worldwide census, which necessitates that Joseph and Mary travel to Bethlehem to enrol (Lk 2:1-4). But this unforeseen event is not a hinderance to the development of plot. In fact, the census advances the plot.

The narrator depicts Caesar Augustus, the ruler of the Roman world, as an agent of God, because it is at his request for a world-wide enrollment that Jesus is born in the city of David. Hence, the imperial decree comprises a part of the boule tou theou. The census effects the geographical relocation of Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem, the city of David. Ironically, there is more attention paid to the circumstances of locating the birth in the city of David than there is on the actual narration of the birth. This permits the narrator to place further emphasis on the Davidic connection of Jesus, thereby underscoring the salvific role of Jesus.

The heralding of Jesus' birth to the shepherds is the second confirmation of the fulfillment of the earlier predication regarding his birth. This annunciation to the shepherds varies from the other annunciation scenes in that it follows, rather than

precedes, the birth that it announces. This variation is significant, since it highlights the importance of the birth and the salvation it represents.[32]

The presentation of Jesus is also a pivotal moment in the development of the plot. The two figures, Simeon and Anna, are characterized as pious Jews waiting in expectation for the salvation of God. When Jesus and his parents go to the temple for the purification,[33] Simeon recognizes the salvation of God in the form of the child, and his expectation is fulfilled. Anna also witnesses the child and spreads news of him to all who were looking for redemption (Lk 2:38). The testimonies of these two characters function to further the plot by confirming the identification of Jesus and verifying that his destiny belongs to the boule tou theou. In addition, Simeon's prophetic words advance the plot by raising expectations about future events involving the child. Simeon hints at the extent of the boule tou theou (Lk 2:32), and alludes to the division that will come (Lk 2:34). These two expectations are left unresolved in this portion of the Lucan narrative, and they provide substance for the plot as it develops in the remainder of the gospel.

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[32]It is also interesting to note that the first people who receive the announcement of Jesus' birth are shepherds, not kings nor people of worldly significance. This marks the beginning of the reversals hinted at in Mary's Magnificat (Lk 1:52-53).

[33]Scholars have pointed out that Luke has joined two separate obligations in Luke 2:22-24, namely, the ritual purification of a woman after childbirth and the redemption of the firstborn. For a general discussion of the discrepancies with Jewish praxis see either Fitzmyer, pp. 423-26, or Brown, pp. 436ff. and 447ff. For our purposes here, we are interested in how the presentation of Jesus contributed to the narrative development of plot, not how it diverges from the oriental custom of the time.

CONCLUSION

Our discussion of plot in Luke 1-3 yields several conclusions about the narrative. First, the mere presence of plot indicates that the Lucan narrator crafted the narrative events in a particular sequence, in order to demonstrate that he boule tou theou was being fulfilled in the lives of the two main characters. Second, this narrative creativity reflects the element of choice at the narrator's disposal. Contrary to the notion that he was merely a compiler of events, Luke selected certain events in order to highlight the activity of God. Third, each narrated event is essential to the fulfillment of he boule tou theou. The census of Quirinius is a good illustration of each of these points. As we saw in the previous chapter, the census is an integral part of the temporal framework of the narrative. Its position in the sequence of events is important, not for what it may indicate about the date of birth, but for what that birth signifies about he boule tou theou. The narrator selected the census because it enabled him to locate Mary and Joseph in the city of David prior to the birth of Jesus. This placed additional emphasis on Davidic connection, thereby confirming Jesus' primacy in he boule tou theou. Clearly, then, the census is an essential component of the narrative and it contributes to the overall development of plot.

CHAPTER FOUR

In the previous chapter we determined that the plot of the Lucan infancy narrative progresses according to the boule tou theou, and that its momentum results from the fulfilment of prediction. There are two strands of the boule tou theou, one that involves John the Baptist, the other, Jesus. But John and Jesus do not function equally in God's plan of salvation for humanity. The depiction of their respective roles places Jesus above John in the boule tou theou. Other features of the narrative also contribute to this contrasting characterization of Jesus and John in order to augment the superiority of Jesus. One among many narrated events, the census contributes in a limited fashion to the characterization of Jesus, and aids in this process of differentiation with John. In this chapter an investigation of the narrative characterization of Jesus and John will permit discussion of the distinction between Jesus and John as agents of God.

Prior to our investigation, we must first distinguish the study of characterization from the study of character. Although these two are related, their emphases are different. The latter involves the identification of character with the attribution of a name (e.g. Zechariah) or a definite description (e.g. a priest from the Abijah division),.[1] and often, character analysis will proceed by categorizing the character according to the

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[1]James Garvey, "Characterization in Narrative," Poetics 7 (1978), p. 63. I have adapted his examples to reflect the current discussion of Luke.

types proposed by E.M. Forster.[2] Then, the characters are shown either to be autonomous beings with traits, or plot functionaries, depending on the camp to which the analyst belongs.[3]

In distinction, the study of characterization focuses on the processes by which the narrator presents characters to the reader.[4] Characterization is "the art and technique by which an author fashion a convincing portrait of a person."[5] Usually, this *builds* on the identification of character by endowing "an identified character with an attribute or set of attributes (also called 'traits', 'qualities', or 'characteristics') which add descriptive material" to that character.[6] But how is information about a character imparted to the reader, and who discloses that information?

Wayne Booth identifies two main narrative techniques that facilitate the process of characterization. He labels these telling and showing.[7] Telling is the most explicit

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[2]Forster identifies two types of character: round and flat. See Aspects of the Novel, pp 75-85. The present investigation, however, will not concern itself with character analysis.

[3]See, for example, Chatman, p. 111, 119. Culpepper succinctly identifies the two contrasting approaches in Anatomy, p. 102. David Gowler provides a comprehensive synthesis of the contrasting positions. See Host, Guest, Enemy, and Friend: Portraits of the Pharisees in Luke and Acts, Emory Studies in Early Christianity, Vol. 2 (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), pp. 29-54.

[4]Lemon, p. 49.

[5]Culpepper, p. 102.

[6]Garvey, p. 63.

[7]Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 3-20. The terms 'direct definition' and 'indirect presentation' will be used interchangeably with 'telling' and 'showing'. See also Gowler, p. 72.

form of characterization. It involves the direct description, or overt naming of a character's qualities and traits, almost always by the narrator.[8] Although modern literary theory considers this technique to be undesirable,[9] it nevertheless "plays a critical part in characterization because it creates in the mind of the reader an explicit, authoritative, and static impression of a character."[10] In addition, it is helpful in the initial stages of the story, and it guides the reader directly and clearly.[11] Thus the reader is told that Zechariah and Elizabeth are "righteous before God," childless, and "advanced in years." (Lk 1:6-7) Likewise, the narrator directly characterizes Anna as an older woman, widowed for many years, and living a religious lifestyle (Lk 2:36-37).[12]

The other technique of characterization, showing, or indirect presentation, is less overt and considered more artistic than telling.[13] Through indirect presentation, the narrator shows the qualities and traits of the characters, but the reader must make the appropriate inferences by comparing and evaluating the presentation. Indirect

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[8]Whereas M.H. Abrams ascribes the role of telling to the author (p. 21), Gowler permits both the narrator and characters to be involved in direct definition (p. 72).

[9]Booth indicates that others consider this technique to be stilted and intrusive. See Rhetoric of Fiction, p. 8.

[10]Gowler, p. 57.

[11]Ibid. Since he argues for the usefulness of the direct definition process of characterization, Gowler advocates a mixture of telling and showing.

[12]The narrator also characterizes Mary and Joseph (Lk 1:27), and Simeon (Lk 2:25-26) through the process of telling.

[13]Booth, p. 8.

characterization can be accomplished "through the report of actions; through appearance, gestures, posture, costume; through one character's comments on another; through direct speech by the character; [or] through inward speech, either summarized or quoted as interior monologue".[14] These three categories, action, external appearance, and speech, are discussed by David Gowler, who also includes in his categories of indirect presentation the processes of defining a character's environment, and comparison and contrast with other characters.[15]

The Lucan account incorporates a mixture of direct and indirect characterization. Whereas the minor characters are characterized primarily through direct definition, most of the characterization of John and Jesus is achieved through the processes of indirect presentation. Contrasting the characterization of John and Jesus using the categories of speech, action, and environment indicated above will facilitate our investigation of the narrative superiority of Jesus over John.[16]

Speech is a frequently used technique of indirect presentation in Luke 1-3. In the previous chapter we saw how the speech of both Zechariah and the angel Gabriel characterizes John's role within he boule tou theou. They depict John as one who will

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[14]Alter, Art of Biblical Narrative, pp. 116-117.

[15]See Gowler, pp. 72-73, for a summary of each of these processes of indirect presentation. Bar-Efrat also advocates the process of comparison and contrast as a method of indirect characterization (p. 86).

[16]Although a category on its own, the process of comparison and contrast for the characterization of two characters may involve the other techniques as well. Since the external appearances of Jesus and John are never given, this method of characterization will not be discussed.

convert others to the Lord, and his role is distinctly that of a forerunner (Lk 1:16-17; 1:76-77). Yet there is more in their speech that contributes to the characterization of John. Gabriel states that John will be "great before the Lord," and "he will be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Lk 1:15). In addition, he places two images of John before the reader. He is characterized as a Nazarite (Lk 1:15), and also as the eschatological Elijah figure (Lk 1:17). This latter image conveys his position within he boule tou theou.

Zechariah was instructed to call his child Yohanan, a name whose etymology means "God has shown favour." This given name highlights the intervention of God in this birth, thereby emphasizing the fact that John is sent by God. On the occasion of his naming, neighbours and relatives grasp the reality of this, and they ponder what John will become (Lk 1:66). Zechariah utters prophetic words which include the title by which John will be known. The title "prophet of the Most High" (Lk 1:76) defines his role in relation to Jesus, and affirms the depiction of his role as a forerunner. But the main thrust of the Benedictus is an affirmation of the salvific role of Jesus; two-thirds of it pertain to the salvation which Jesus will bring, whereas only one-third concerns John.

In a similar manner, John's own speech reveals as much about the characterization of Jesus as it does his own self understanding. When interrogated by the people coming to him, John describes his role vis-á-vis the Messiah, the one who is to come after him. He characterizes the Messiah as mighty, and considers himself unworthy to untie his sandals (Lk 3:16), which underscores his inferior status in relation to Jesus in he boule tou theou. This self depiction leaves no doubt that John perceives

his role in <u>he boule tou theou</u> to be less significant than the Messiah; he perceives himself to be a forerunner. This converges with the portrait indicated by the speech of Zechariah and the angel Gabriel, and is confirmed by the quoted prophecy from Isaiah.

Turning to Jesus, we find that the angelic speech contributes much to the characterization of Jesus. In addition to the role of Jesus discussed in the previous chapter, the angel Gabriel indicates that Jesus will be great and holy. In the annunciation to Mary Gabriel identifies Jesus to the reader implicitly as the Davidic Messiah (Lk 1:32-33), and explicitly as the "Son of the Most High" (Lk 1:32) and then "the Son of God" (Lk 1:35). To the shepherds the angel refers to Jesus as the "Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (Lk 2:11). These titles, only spoken by heavenly beings in the narrative, are expressions that identify Jesus directly to the reader as the Messiah and Son of God.[17]

Other characters use different expressions to identify Jesus. Zechariah refers to Jesus as the horn of salvation from the house of David, which contributes to our understanding of Jesus' role in the <u>boule tou theou</u>. He also refers to Jesus as the Lord (Lk 1:76). Likewise, Elizabeth, full of the Holy Spirit, recognizes that Jesus is the Lord, when she asks why "the mother of [her] Lord should come to [her]" (Lk 1:43). By inference, this demonstrates that Elizabeth concedes that the role of Jesus is superior to that of her own son. The use of the term Lord by Zechariah and Elizabeth signifies their

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[17]James M. Dawsey observes that the various designations for Jesus are not used interchangably in the Gospel of Luke. In this instance, the angels share a secret knowledge with the reader, which gives the reader an advantage over the characters in the text. See <u>The Lukan Voice: Confusion and Irony in the Gospel of Luke</u> (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), pp. 7-9.

acknowledgement of Jesus' authority and power,[18] and it contributes to his characterization.

Simeon, after being established as a reliable character, gives testimony to the child Jesus, who was brought to the temple by his parents. Since Simeon awaits the salvation of the Lord, this scene is decisive. He confirms that he has seen the salvation of the Lord in the child, and he states that Jesus will be "a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for the glory to [God's] people Israel" (Lk 2:32). The narrative further implies that Anna also recognized the salvation of the Lord in Jesus, since she gave testimony to all "who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (Lk 2:38). The witness of these two prophets confirms the characterization of Jesus as the expected Messiah, and it contributes to the differentiation between Jesus and John. Whereas only one prophet speaks after John's birth, two speak after Jesus', thereby placing a greater emphasis on his characterization.

As with John, Jesus also contributes to his own characterization. When he remained behind after the Passover Feast (Lk 2:41-51), Jesus is first characterized by the narrator as outstanding in wisdom. He is located amongst the teachers in the temple, and his understanding and answers impressed all who heard him (Lk 2:47).[19] Then, when questioned by his parents as to the reason for staying behind, Jesus replied that he "must

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[18]James M. Dawsey, "What's in a Name? Characterization in Luke," Biblical Theology Bulletin 16 (1986), p. 146. In his discusison, he argues that the term "lord", indicates a position of faith. See also Dawsey, The Lukan Voice, pp. 9-13.

[19]This corresponds to the earlier growth summary of Jesus that he "grew and became strong, filled with wisdom;" (Lk 2:40).

be in [his] Father's house" (Lk 2:49). Implicitly, this suggests that Jesus considers himself the Son of God. Although Mary and Joseph do not understand Jesus' saying (which contributes to their own characterization), the reader has been equipped with enough knowledge to realize that Jesus' self understanding converges with the earlier depiction by the angel Gabriel.

In the baptism episode, the voice from heaven (which is the focal point of the scene) also confirms the developing characterization of Jesus. The divine sonship of Jesus, already established in the narrative by both the angel and Jesus, is reinforced by the voice from heaven, which states of Jesus: "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased." (Lk 3:22) Following this episode, the narrator concludes our section with a descriptive pause, which outlines the genealogy of Jesus. By including this, the narrator further confirms the identity of Jesus both as a Davidic (Lk 3:31), and as the Son of God (Lk 3:38).

Other processes of indirect presentation contribute less to the characterization of Jesus and John than did the category of speech. Nevertheless, actions and environment do have a role in the characterization of Jesus and John. The action of circumcision, performed by both sets of parents for their respective infants (Lk 1:59; 2:21), reflects Jewish piety and adherence to the Law. This theme of religious piety finds expansion only in the Jesus strand of the story. Jesus is taken to the temple for the

purification/presentation ritual in Lk 2:22,39, and the family regularly participated in the Passover Feast in Jerusalem (Lk 41-42).[20]

Actions performed by either John or Jesus are primarily limited to when they are adults, with the peculiar exception of John's prophetic leap in his mother's womb. His action signifies to Elizabeth that Mary is the mother of her Lord. Already in the womb, John's action indicates his position in relation to Jesus. As an adult, John's primary activities include preaching and baptism. The narrator informs the reader directly about John's role. Two summary statements of John's activity provide a clear indication of what John's work of preparing the way for Jesus entailed. He was "preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Lk 3:3), and with exhortations, "he preached good news to the people" (Lk 3:18). Clearly, John's actions are integral to his role as a forerunner, and they supplement that characterization of him. The final action of John, which is actually the cessation of his action, highlights the demise of his ministry. The occasion of his imprisonment is achronological, but its position in the narrative clearly segregates the ministry of John from that of Jesus. Thus even the temporal ordering of events, manipulated by the narrator, reinforces the differentiation between Jesus and John, by depicting John as the precursor whose ministry terminates prior to the inauguration of Jesus'.

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[20]It should be noted that Zechariah and Elizabeth are characterized directly as righteous before God, and the reader is told that they "walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord" (Lk 1:6). However, it is only through indirect presentation that the reader infers that Mary and Joseph also are faithful, observant Jews.

Actions that characterize Jesus are limited in Luke 1-3, since this section antedates the advent of Jesus' ministry. The main actions which Jesus performs all lead to the characterization of him as an obedient, observant Jew. Twice, together with his parents, Jesus goes to the temple in Jerusalem to fulfil ritual obligations (Lk 2:22-39; 2:41-51). After the second occasion, Jesus chose to remain behind "in [his] Father's house" (Lk 2:49). When his parents found him, Jesus was obedient to them (Lk 2:51) and returned to Nazareth with them. Jesus is also characterized as submitting to John's baptism, after which he engages in prayer. This religious piety and obedience, so clearly present in Jesus' actions, is noticably absent from John's. Whereas John's actions contribute to his characterization as a forerunner, the actions of Jesus go beyond the characterization of his role to supplement the reader's understanding of him.

The environment of a character, both social and physical, reveals significant things about their characterization. In the case of Jesus and John, it contributes to their differentiation. The social environment of John is infered from that of his parents, which the narrator directly defines as priestly origins (Lk 1:5). Yet despite this priestly background, John is never himself characterized as a priest, nor is he associated with the temple. But Jesus, whose exact social environment is unclear from the narrative, is mentioned in frequent relation to the temple.[21] Despite the narrator's mention of Joseph's Davidic ancestry, several factors in the narrative imply that Jesus' origins are humble. The words of Mary, spoken in her song of praise indicate her lowliness: "he

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[21]Cf. Lk 2:22-39 and Lk 2:41-51.

has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden" (Lk 1:48a).[22] Her focus on reversals (Lk 1:51-53) suggests that one may have already taken place. The obvious inference here is that Jesus's social environment is humble, which contrasts sharply with that of John. Yet the narrative does not imply that this was a disadvantage; in fact, the narrative elevates Jesus to a position over John.

The physical environment of John is always defined in general terms. He is born in the hills of Judea, where his parents are said to live (Lk 1:39). But no city or village is specified. Similarly, when John begins his public ministry the location remains unspecified. John is simply in the wilderness, in the region about the Jordan (Lk 3:2-3). In contrast, the environment of Jesus is always specified, and he is depicted as a traveller, both of which signify his importance.

Even prior to Jesus' birth there is considerable movement within his strand of the narrative. After the annunciation to Mary, which takes place in Nazareth, she journeys to the home of Elizabeth for a visit and then returns home. Then, with great narrative effort, the setting is changed once again as Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem prior to the birth of Jesus, to enrol for the census of Quirinius.[23]

After Jesus is born they all travel from Bethlehem to the Temple in Jerusalem to fulfil ritual obligations, after which they return to Nazareth. Jesus journeys again as he and his parents travel to the temple in Jerusalem for the Passover Feast, and then

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[22]Admittedly, this is Mary's self characterization, but it appears to be a reliable characterization because it is a response of praise to God for selecting her for his purpose.

[23]For the impact of this geographical relocation, see the previous chapter on plot.

returns home again. In each of these examples, Jesus is portrayed as a traveller.[24] He is visibly more mobile than John, and his physical environment is always clearly defined. The fact that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and is often associated with the temple is no insignificant fact. The birth in Bethlehem, occasioned by the census of Quirinius, underscores the angel's prediction of Jesus as the Davidic Messiah. Jesus' association with the temple is indicative of his role as the saviour, because the temple signifies divine presence. These all point to the superiority of Jesus over John, who is never associated with the temple, but only with the wilderness around the Jordan.

In Luke 1-3 there are several parallel events, and attention to the differences can also contribute to the contrasting characterization of Jesus and John, for "parallel acts or situations are used to comment on each other in biblical narrative."[25] Numerous schemes have been proposed to illustrate the structure of parallelism that is operative in the narrative.[26] However, our interest lies not in the structure of the parallel events, but rather in what those parallel events disclose about the characterization of John and Jesus.

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[24]Mary Ann Tolbert points to the connection between the Greek ideal of the adventurous journey and the mobility characteristic of Hellenistic times as the basis for the gospel's depiction of Jesus as a traveller. See Sowing the Gospel, pp. 38-39, especially note 12.

[25]Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative, p. 9.

[26]Brown discusses the internal structure of Luke 1-2 in Birth of the Messiah, pp. 248. Brown first discusses the parallels of the annunciation scenes in pp. 292-298, then the birth parallels in pp. 408ff. See also Fitzmyer, pp. 313-315.

There are significant narrative differences visible in the parallel events of the two strands of the story, which place a greater emphasis on Jesus. Three corresponding events contribute to the differentiation of Jesus and John. The first is the occasion of birth. Even though the two births are narrated with a similar economy of words (Lk 1:57; 2:6-7), the narrative distinctly commends to the reader the birth of Jesus as more significant.[27] This is accomplished through the multiple announcements of his birth: first by the narrator (Lk 2:6-7), then in the annunciation to the shepherds (Lk 2:9-14), and lastly, through the testimony of the shepherds (Lk 2:17-18).

Although situated in different contexts, the second example is the event in which other characters realize the intervention of God in the birth. For John, this is situated in the context of his circumcision and naming (Lk 1:59-66). Friends and family recognize God's intervention, yet they are unable to forsee what John will be (Lk 1:66). In response to their question, Zechariah utters prophetic words about the future of his child. But the attention to the future greatness of John pales in comparison to that of Jesus. The corresponding event for Jesus is located within the presentation episode at the temple (Lk 2:22-39). Here, two figures from the temple, Simeon and Anna, not only recognize the salvation of the Lord, but they give testimony to Jesus, and prophesize about the future greatness of the child.

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[27]This is in contrast to Fitzmyer, who states, "the parallels between the births are less pronounced [than the announcement episodes], since only two verses are devoted to John's whereas Jesus' birth get twelve verses." The Gospel According to Luke, p. 314. See also Brown, p. 374, who makes a similar remark about the less than perfect parallelism in the stories of birth.

The last example in Luke 1-3 which contributes to the differentiation between Jesus and John is the inclusion of growth summaries for each character. Despite the obvious emphasis on Jesus, indicated by the two summaries of his growth (Lk 2:40; 2:52), and the single instance for John (Lk 1:80), the content of these summaries functions to distinguish Jesus from John. Whereas John became strong in the spirit, Jesus grew in wisdom. The contrast is even more striking between the isolation of John in the wilderness and the development of Jesus in the midst of humanity.

These examples clearly demonstrate that although certain events are paralleled in both strands of the story, John and Jesus are not parallel agents of God. The differences contrast the characterization of Jesus and John, and contribute to the portrait of Jesus as the primary character in he boule tou theou.

CONCLUSION

The discussion above illustrates the literary skill of the narrator in the characterization of John and Jesus. The intensity with which the narrator contrasts the characterization of these two reinforces the primacy of Jesus in he boule tou theou. The characterization of John, which is closely linked with that of Jesus, highlights the significance of Jesus. In contrast, the characterization of Jesus diminishes the importance of John. This differentiation is achieved primarily through the indirect processes of characterization: speech, actions, and environment.

The census event plays a small role in the characterization of Jesus. It does not directly depict Jesus as the Davidic Messiah, but through inference, it contributes to that

characterization by providing the mechanism whereby Jesus could be born in the city of David. This highlights the Davidic connection, and keeps this association before the reader. As well, the census, which generates the geographical relocation of Mary and Joseph, distinguishes the birth of Jesus from that of John. Its inclusion hints at the world-wide significance of Jesus' birth, since it was ordered by Caesar Augustus. This stands out over the local importance of John's birth and supports the characterization of Jesus as the principal figure in <u>he boule tou theou</u>.

CONCLUSION

This study has endeavoured to demonstrate that narrative criticism is a useful tool for understanding the function of the census of Quirinius (Lk 2:2) within the Lucan narrative text. We have investigated three ways in which the census interacts with other components of the narrative in Luke 1-3, and our inquiry has shown that this section of Luke is a carefully constructed narrative. All the constituent elements are tightly woven together, and this draws attention to the literary artistry of the narrator. Contrary to the assumption that Luke either misinterpreted his sources, or confused his details concerning the census, our analysis has demonstrated that the census of Quirinius is a carefully chosen temporal marker that performs several essential functions within the overall presentation of the story.

In chapter one the survey and analysis of the current state of the question concerning the census of Quirinius has shown that the attempts to merge the internal chronology of the narrative with the external chronology of historical data are problematic. At that point we considered the Lucan notion of history writing, and we evaluated how reliable his account in Luke 1-3 is historically, given the disparities between the text and external historical fact. The proposal that we consider this temporal data as verisimilar removes the earlier emphasis on the census as a reflection of reality and replaces it with the recognition of its use as realistic detail. This recognition enables

78

us to move beyond the referential function of the census to investigate its narrative function as a temporal marker.

In chapter two our temporal analysis yields the observation that the Lucan narrator is not restricted by the limits of physical, objective time. Narrative time progresses according to the requirements of the narrative. Temporal and spatial coordinates in Luke 1-3 function to locate for the reader the episodes within the story, and they sustain the flow of the narrative by linking the current episodes to previous ones; when the temporal continuum is suspended, temporal markers function to resume the interrupted flow. This coherent plotting of time creates a chronological framework within which the reader may understand the story. Within the limited scope of our analysis in Luke 1-3 we have ascertained that the temporal markers, including the census of Quirinius, are integral to the overall framework of the narrative. Further investigation of the Lucan temporal markers might yield a more conclusive understanding of the function of temporal markers within the whole gospel.

As a temporal marker in the narrative, the census is an essential component of the setting. It maintains the flow of the narrative and it contributes to the momentum of plot, which we investigated in chapter three. The very presence of plot indicates to the reader that these events are not merely recorded, but that they are carefully selected and blended together to demonstrate that he boule tou theou is being fulfilled in the lives of John and Jesus. The census functions to demonstrate this by providing the mechanism whereby the Davidic Messiah may be born in Bethlehem, the city of David. Plot unfolds

in this portion of the narrative through the fulfilment of prediction. This pattern is well-established in Luke 1-3, and it creates certain expectations in the reader regarding the outcome of the story. How these expectations are resolved in the Lucan narrative lies outside the scope of the present study.

In the final chapter our analysis further demonstrates the importance of the census, not for what it may indicate about the dating of Jesus' birth, but for what that birth signifies to the reader about the character Jesus and his role within he boule tou theou. By contrasting the characterization of John and Jesus in the narrative, the narrator communicates the significance of Jesus' role to the reader. Through the process of characterization the reader learns that Jesus is superior to John, and therefore that Jesus is to be distinguished as the primary agent of God.

This investigation of temporal setting, plot, and characterization describes the reading process as the reader interacts with the text. The reader's response to the story is shaped in part by the need to find consistency within the story. When the reader encounters the census of Quirinius in Luke 2:2 the reader must search for its meaning. How, for example, does the census relate to the other temporal markers? There is no indication that the reader implied by the text would understand the census in a referential manner, because this referential understanding causes disunity with the other temporal markers. Furthermore, the implied reader does not possess the tools available to modern scholarship with which to assess the accuracy and consistency of the Lucan temporal markings. The reader is only equipped with a general knowledge of certain political

events and historical details. This general knowledge obtained through details that are verisimilar enables the reader to locate the story temporally within a particular Palestinian and Roman context. As for consistency, the reader finds this the narrative itself, by determining how the census interacts with the other components of the narrative.

Our investigation of the interaction of the census of Quirinius with the other narrative components has revealed that the census indisputably belongs to the temporal framework of the narrative. Its location in the narrative furthers plot; and it contributes, in a limited manner, to the contrasting characterization of John and Jesus. Therefore, employing a narrative critical approach in the reconsideration of the census question has demonstrated that the key to understanding the census of Quirinius lies in appreciating its function within the Lucan narrative.

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