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Scripture

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THE TEMPTATION ACCOUNT IN ST. LUKE (4, 1-13)

Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian and Origen interpreted the Temptation account in terms of the entire history of salvation.¹ Jesus is the New Adam. Unlike the first Adam, Jesus is victorious in his encounter with Satan. The Church Fathers gave greater importance to the Adam typology than to the Exodus typology. They also interpreted the Temptation as an adumbration of the Passion and of the future temptations of the Church.²

Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome and Gregory the Great explained the Temptation from a moral and psychological perspective.³ Jesus is an example for Christians in time of temptation. The temptations were concretized. Gluttony, vain glory, and ambition were respectively symbolized by the temptation to change stones into bread, to leap from the pinnacle of the Temple, and to acquire the kingdoms of this world.

Today, R. Bultmann,⁴ G. Bornkamm⁵ and W. Grundmann⁶ deny the historicity of the Temptation; whereas, V. Taylor,⁷ J. Jeremias,⁸ and T. W. Manson⁹ affirm it. For Bultmann the temptations are similar to those ascribed in other religious literature to other holy men. A. Plummer asserts that the temptations arise from a natural mental reaction to the events of the preceding narrative of the baptism, inasmuch as times of spiritual exaltation are commonly followed by occasions of special temptation.¹⁰

In all three Gospels Jesus at the time of the Temptation is under the influence of the Holy Spirit. All the Gospels agree in using the word

¹ Cf. M. Steiner, *La tentation de Jésus dans l'interprétation patristique de Saint Justin à Origène* (Paris, 1962).

² The patristic exegesis is especially typological and theological; it remains faithful to the basic sense of the Temptation. The messianic interpretation, common among contemporary exegetes, was the exception. It is found in Origen, Cf. Steiner, 154-158.

³ Cf. J. M. Vosté, *De baptismo, tentatione et transfiguratione Iesu* (Rome, 1934), 100-104.

⁴ *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* (2nd ed., Göttingen, 1931), 270-74.

⁵ *Jesus von Nazareth* (Heidelberg, 1956), 158.

⁶ *Die Geschichte Jesu Christi* (2nd ed., Berlin, 1959), 271.

⁷ *The Life and Ministry of Jesus* (London, 1955), 52-54.

⁸ *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*, (Göttingen, 1958), 105-106.

⁹ *The Sayings of Jesus* (London, 1949), 45.

¹⁰ *Exegetical Commentary on St Matthew* (London, 1909), 35.

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peirazo to describe the temptation;¹¹ in attributing the temptation to the devil (or to Satan, in Mark); in making the desert the location of the temptation; and in designating a forty-day duration, which is probably a reference to the fasts just mentioned, recalling the forty years of the temptation which Israel underwent in the desert.¹²

In the tradition common to Matthew and Luke, Jesus fasts during the temptations. The detail suggests the motivation for the first temptation and recalls the fasts of Moses (Ex. 34.28; Dt. 9.9) and of Elias (1 Kgs. 19.8). The threefold temptation is common to this tradition, although the order of the temptations is different. The third temptation in Matthew becomes the second in Luke and vice-versa.

Elements found in the Matthean account that are not found in the Lucan version include the "forty nights" (4.2) and the "high mountain" (4.8). Elements of the Marcan account lacking in the Lucan presentation are the "wild beasts" (1.15) and the ministering angels (1.13). Luke omits mention of the angels found in both Matthew and Mark because of his different perspective.

Luke alone employs the expression "full of the Holy Spirit" (4.1), a typically Lucan phrase (Acts 6.5; 7.55; 11.24).¹³ The concluding verse distinguishes the Lucan edition from the others (4.13); it is the key to understanding the special purpose for which he recounts this story. Luke relates the story to the Passion. He explicitly mentions that the devil departed from him for "a while" (4.13), namely, until "the hour" of his passion, death and resurrection. Satan returns at the hour of the passion: "this is your hour, and the power of darkness" (22.53; Acts 26.18, where the power of darkness is identified with the dominion of Satan). The insistent demands for a sign which begin with the Temptation, continue to the end of Jesus' life with the mocking cry, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" (23.37). The cry echoes Satan's "If you are the Son of God . . ." (4.3; 9).¹⁴

¹¹ This word is used in the LXX as an equivalent of *nissah*; thus, both the Greek and the Hebrew words mean to "test" or to "try" a person. God tests Abraham (Gn 22.1). The Hebrews put God to the test (Ex 17.2; Num 14.22; Dt 33.8).

¹² C. K. Barrett, *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition* (London, 1947), 51; W. P. Du Bose, *The Gospel in the Gospels* (London, 1911), 35-41.

¹³ The seven deacons, Stephen and Barnabas (Acts 6.3-5; 7.55; 11.24) were also "filled with the Holy Spirit"; also, the beneficiaries of Pentecost, Peter and the first Christians and Paul receiving baptism (Acts 2.4; 4.8, 31; 9.17).

¹⁴ C. B. Caird, *Saint Luke* (Pelican Gospel Commentary) (London, 1963), 79, notes another "echo" when he comments that the Temptation is a sequel to the Baptism. Jesus knows his unique vocation and rejects all unworthy interpretations of his baptismal experience in which he had heard the heavenly voice saying, "You are my beloved Son." Now Jesus hears another voice, "If you are the Son of God . . ." and he must discern whether it comes from the same source. Three times he concludes that the voice which prompts him to action is that of the devil.

A. Feuillet believes that the Lucan account of the Passion points out the exemplary character of Jesus' temptation.¹⁵ Jesus is the New Adam, the prototype of every Christian in temptation and in victory over it. This makes Jesus the antitype of the first Adam, who fell when tempted in paradise (Lk. 3.38). Satan tempts Jesus less as Messiah than as an ordinary man. The temptation becomes an example for all the baptized, depicting Jesus as the model of human victory over temptation.

Much of Feuillet's argument is based on the genealogy of Jesus which in the Lucan edition (3.23-38) appears immediately before the Temptation, and after the Baptism of Jesus.¹⁶ Luke universalizes the genealogy more than Matthew, and extends it back to Adam. This links Jesus with the creation of the first Adam. Just as Adam represented a beginning for mankind, Jesus analogously represents a new beginning. Adam in 3.38 is man made in the image of God; his derivation from God points to this divine image (Acts 17.26) and to the true humanity of Jesus which corresponds to this creation. Luke does not conclude the genealogy with Adam as sinner but points to his divine origin. Thus, if the baptism of Jesus is the point of departure for a new humanity in which Jesus is the prototype of the baptized, Feuillet would conclude that the temptation of Jesus represents the divine exemplar of the baptized in their victory over the devil. If Jesus as the "beloved Son" (3.22) has a unique dignity (Baptism), as true man he is comparable with others and can become an example to his own.

Feuillet's attempt to explain the Lucan edition of the Temptation in terms of the Adam typology assumes that the Temptation is formally related to the temptation of Adam and to those of Christians.¹⁷ Luke gives no description of the Baptism and its circumstances that would substantiate the assumption that the Temptation account formally represents Jesus as the exemplar of the newly baptized in their struggle against the devil. Nor would the one explicit reference to Adam in the genealogy (3.38) justify employing the Adam typology as the key to interpreting the Lucan Temptation account. I. de la Potterie's study of the literary structure of these pericopes clearly indicates that the genealogy is linked with the Baptism pericope and not with the Temptation pericope.¹⁸ The closeness of Adam's name to the Temptation pericope

¹⁵ A. Feuillet, "Le récit Lucanien de la tentation (Lc 4,1-13), *Biblica* (1959), 613-631.

¹⁶ Several other biblical scholars have noted and argued from the unique position of the genealogy. Cf. A. Hastings, *Prophet and Witness in Jerusalem* (London, 1958), 24; E. J. Tinsley, *The Gospel According to Luke* (Cambridge Bible Commentary) (London, 1965), 49-50.

¹⁷ I. de la Potterie, *Excerpta Exegetica ex Evangelio Sancti Lucae*, informally published class notes (Rome, 1963-1964), 114, rejects Feuillet's interpretation of the Lucan Temptation account on this basis.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 115.

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and the genuine parallelism between the temptation of Adam and that of Jesus explain why the Adam typology appealed to the Fathers as a means of interpreting this pericope. Paul explicitly expresses this typology in Rom. 5.19, where he speaks of the opposition between the "disobedience of one man" and of "the obedience of one"; however, even if there is a true parallelism between the situations of Adam and of Christ, there is no evidence in the Lucan text that Luke had this in mind.

The main elements absent from the Lucan edition of the Temptation that are characteristic of the other editions are: (1) the fast of 40 days and 40 nights (Mt. 4.2); (2) the high mountain (Mt. 4.8); (3) "He was with wild beasts" (Mk. 1.13); (4) the ministering angels (Mt. 4.11; Mk. 1.13). The two Matthean elements suggest the Moses typology; the last two suggest a messianic interpretation. The high mountain is not a visionary conception as in Apoc. 21.10, but suggests Pisgah, the mountain from which Moses viewed the Promised Land.¹⁹ So from this mountain Jesus views a possible kingdom which he rejects: the Messianic Kingdom would not be established in collaboration with Satan and his methods. Because the Messiah's kingdom is different, it is established in a completely different way. The wild beasts may represent a reminiscence of the friendly relation between Adam and the beasts in Paradise before the Fall.²⁰ The Messiah's victory over Satan would re-establish the idyllic conditions of primeval times, before the entry of sin into the world. The dominion over wild beasts is associated with conquest over Satan. The Messianic prophecies in Is. 11.6; Ez. 34.21; are important in this context, as well as Ps. 91, 11-13 and Job 5.23. In all these passages the wild beasts have, in different ways, ceased to be dangerous.²¹ The theme of the ministering angels appears to be derived from Psalm 91, which in the Matthean context has a messianic sense. In his struggle against Satan, Jesus is attended by angels (Mt. 26.53). Both cases recall the miraculous feeding of Elias by angels (1 Kgs. 19.5).²²

Furthermore the order of the temptations in the Lucan account of (1) stones, (2) kingdoms, (3) temple, does not correspond to the temptations of Israel in the desert; whereas, as J. Dupont has noted, the Matthean order of the temptations inverts that of Deuteronomy and corresponds perfectly with the order of the real Exodus events (Ex. 16;

¹⁹ E. Klostermann, *Das Matthäusevangelium* (Berlin, 1927), 29.

²⁰ J. Jeremias, art. "adam" in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum neuen Testament*, I. ed. by G. Kittel (Stuttgart, 1933), 141.

²¹ C. K. Barrett, *The Holy Spirit*, 50.

²² *Ibid.*,

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17; 23. 24).²³ The Israel typography is not suggested. In this respect the Lucan edition of the Temptation differs from that of Matthew, which interprets the temptations in the light of Israel's history.

Though all three Gospels agree that Jesus is under the influence of the Spirit at the time of the Temptation, the expressions in Mark and Matthew suggest that Jesus was constrained by the Spirit to go into the desert.²⁴ Mark 1.12 reads: "The Spirit cast him out into the desert"; in contrast, the Lucan version reads: "Jesus being full of the Holy Spirit returned . . . and was led in the Spirit into the desert." Luke avoids giving the impression that the Spirit is an agent set over Jesus. He is not satisfied with the Old Testament idea of the Spirit seizing a man. As Lord and agent "in" (not "by") the Holy Spirit, Jesus goes into the desert under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Luke introduces the Spirit again in 4.14, and from then on the dominant description of Jesus is that of one who possesses the power of the Spirit. This is the first instance of the Holy Spirit's being a power in the struggle against Satan. Luke's use of *pleres*, as opposed to *plestheis*, indicates that Jesus is continually full of the Holy Spirit (4.1-2).²⁵ The descent of the Spirit upon Jesus at the Baptism (3.22) is a great eschatological reality which inaugurates the final conflict between the "power" of the devil (4.6), or the "power of the enemy" (10.19) and the "power" of the Spirit (4.14) which motivates Jesus. These three texts on power in the context of the eschatological struggle between Jesus and the devil are found in Luke alone.

G. W. H. Lampe notes that Luke alone emphasizes the completeness of Jesus' Spirit-possession in connection with the Temptation, and so brings the struggle with the devil within the scope of the Spirit's operation.²⁶ Victory over the forces of evil, as well as the exercise of wisdom and judgment, was part of the work of the Spirit-possessed messianic leader prophesied by Isaiah, and the activity of the Holy Spirit is often associated by Luke with the conflict against the adversary (e.g. 10.21). The Lucan text indicates that both the action of the Spirit and the temptations extended over a period of forty days.²⁷

In the first temptation (4.3-4) two Lucan peculiarities stand out. Jesus

²³ J. Dupont, "Les tentations de Jésus dans le désert (Mt 4.1-13)," *Assemblées du Seigneur* 26 (1962), 37-53. "Les tentations de Jésus dans le récit de Luc (Lc 4.1-13)," *Sciences Ecclesiastiques* 14 (1962), 7-29.

²⁴ E. Schweizer, art., "Spirit of God" in *Bible Key Words* III, tr. D. Barton, P. Ackroyd, A. Harvey (New York, 1960), 37.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ G. W. H. Lampe, "The Holy Spirit in the Writings of St Luke," in *Studies in the Gospels in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot*, ed. D. E. Nineham (Oxford, 1955), 170.

²⁷ I. de la Potterie, *Excerpta Exegetica*, 116.

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is tempted to turn a stone into bread; in the Matthean version he is tempted to turn stones into loaves. The Lucan temptation offers the solution to one man's hunger; whereas Matthew's use of the plural suggests the Israel typology and Dt. 8.2, which refers to the forty years of trial in the desert and the miracle of the manna. The Temptation in Matthew suggests a repetition of the miracle of the manna, which was expected in messianic times; in Luke, the Temptation has a more personal character. Secondly, in the first two temptations, the citation of Deuteronomy in Christ's response is briefer in Luke than in Matthew; whereas the devil's conversation is longer in Luke than in Matthew.

In the second temptation (4.5-8) the Lucan text differs from Matthew's in several ways. Luke makes no mention of the mountain from which all the kingdoms of the world are seen. The omission can be explained by the phrase "in a moment of time", which implies that Christ was not physically transported to a high place, and that he did not actually view with his eyes all the kingdoms of the world. This would be clearly impossible. The devil tempts Jesus with an internal, imagined, ecstatic view.²⁸ Grundmann believes that the expression "he took him up" (*anagagon*) suggests the apocalyptic and visionary character of the event.²⁹

The Lucan expression "of the world" (*oikoumenes*) (2.1; 21.26; Acts 11.26; 17.6. 31; 19.27; 24.5) designates the inhabited universe and suggests the political character of the devil's offer of world dominion.³⁰

Luke's editing of this pericope is also noteworthy for the addition of the world "authority" (*exousia*).³¹ The devil claims authority over the world. This authority, he claims, has been committed (*paradedotai*) to him, and he can apparently hand it on to whomsoever he wishes. The word *exousia* often occurs in Luke in the context of political power, (7.8; 12.11; 19.17; 20.20; 23.7). Political authority is offered to Jesus. Luke alone, of all the Synoptics, speaks of the "power" of the devil. It is a power which "has been given" to him, the "power of darkness" mentioned in the Passion account (22.53), and described in Acts 26.18 as "the power of Satan". It is the apocalyptic and eschatological concept of the opposition of two kingdoms which was common in Judaism and the primitive Church. John writes of "the prince of this world" (12.31; 14.30; 16.11). Luke would seem to have had contact with the Johannine tradition, which might explain the literary simi-

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 117.

²⁹ W. Grundmann, *Das Lukas Evangelium* (Berlin, 1961), 116.

³⁰ I. de la Potterie, *Excerpta Exegetica*, 117.

³¹ *Ibid.*

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larity of this text with Apoc. 13.1-8, where the "dragon" (12.9) represents Satan and gives authority (*exousian*) to the "beast", to the Roman Empire, and is "adored" by men (12.4. 12).³²

Of all the verses of the Temptation account these two have undergone the greatest transformation in the Lucan edition. In these verses Luke underscores the *political power* which the devil offers Jesus, and the *apocalyptic* and *eschatological aspect* which is grounded in Satan's universal world power.

In the third temptation (4.9-12) Luke alone mentions that Jesus is taken "to Jerusalem". In Lucan theology the city has especial importance. I. de la Potterie, noting the contrasts in the literary structure of the Lucan and Matthean accounts, concludes that Luke focuses the temptations on Jerusalem.³³

The entire verse 13 is a Lucan addition: "And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him for a while." The victory of Jesus is definitive: the devil could not really "tempt" him. The devil's retreat is merely temporary; he will return at the Passion. Luke alone cites the moment of Satan's return: "Satan entered into Judas" (22.3); and, when Jesus is apprehended at Gethsemane (22.53), he declares "This is your hour and the power of darkness". H. Conzelmann³⁴ and R. Schnackenburg³⁵ do not believe that Jesus underwent temptations in a moral sense; rather, he experienced trials.

Luke situates the last temptation in Jerusalem to stress the close connection between the desert episode and the Passion. In both cases Jesus is attacked by the devil. The Passion, in the Lucan account, is especially the devil's "hour". The Temptation prefigures the Passion in Jerusalem and underscores its importance.

In contrast with Luke, Matthew stresses the messianic aspect of the Temptation, interpreting it with the typology of the Old Testament, and endowing it with a parenetic tone.³⁶ Luke, on the other hand, directs attention to the future events of Christ's Passion, and endows the Temptation with an eschatological and apocalyptic orientation.³⁷ Jesus opposes the "power" of the devil. His interpretation is more soteriological: Jesus' victory over the devil is our salvation. There is

³² M. E. Boismard, "Rapprochements littéraires entre l'Évangile de Luc et l'Apocalypse," in *Synoptische Studien A. Wikenhauser dargebracht* (Berlin, 1950), 53-63.

³³ Cf. *Excerpta Exegetica*, 118.

³⁴ *Die Mitte der Zeit* (Göttingen, 1964), 22.

³⁵ R. Schnackenburg, "Der Sinn der Versuchung Jesu bei den Synoptikern," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 132 (1952), 324-325.

³⁶ I. de la Potterie, *Excerpta Exegetica*, 119.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

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nothing in his account which directly suggests a parenetic orientation. Both Synoptics situate the Temptation in the wider framework of salvation history: Matthew links it with the past phase and Luke with a future phase. In each case the insertion of the Temptation pericope into the overall context of salvation history endows it with a deeper significance.

The concept of the devil which underlies the Temptation account corresponds to the reality of Jesus' life and to his experience (Mk. 1.23-24; Mt. 12.29; Lk. 10.18). His mission involved a genuine struggle against the power of Satan. The early Church believed that Jesus had defeated Satan through his suffering, death, and resurrection (10.13. 31; 16.11; 1 Jn. 3.8; Apoc. 20.2-10).³⁸

The three temptations do not correspond to the temptations of Christians as described in the epistles of the New Testament. They are genuinely messianic: they are the temptations of the Messiah, not of an ordinary individual.³⁹ They occur after Jesus has received his mission from his Father (Baptism), and before the beginning of his mission. This position suggests the close connection of the Temptation with the mission of Jesus and its messianic character, in the Matthean account, and its soteriological character in the Lucan account.

The *fact* of the Temptation cannot be convincingly explained unless it corresponds to an historical reality.⁴⁰ It could only be known if Christ himself had related it; and this is not unlikely, especially since Christ was careful to correct the messianic views of his disciples.⁴¹ The *way* in which the Temptation took place should not be interpreted in a literal sense. The event was by all means a real, interior experience, more profoundly significant than the more externalized, literal interpretation in which Jesus would actually have been taken up to the high mountain and to Jerusalem's Temple pinnacle.

JOHN NAVONE

Gregoriana
Rome

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 123.

³⁹ C. G. Montefiore, *Synoptic Gospels* I (2nd ed., London, 1927), 20.

⁴⁰ I. de la Potterie, *Excerpta Exegetica*, 124.

⁴¹ V. Taylor, *The Person of Christ in the New Testament Teaching* (London, 1958), 10, comments: "Like St. Mark, St. Luke also believes Jesus to be the Messiah. In fact, he uses the name 'Christ' more frequently than Mark, but he rarely introduces it into the sayings of Jesus. In xxiv. 26 and 46 he connects the title with suffering and death. This fact, together with the note of universalism in his Gospel, shows how decisively the Lukan idea of Messiahship has broken from its Jewish moorings."