

streams, and not place two of them in the swamps of the southern Sudan. There are three maps of the economy of Palestine and the Middle East, but no rainfall map with which these could be compared. Furthermore, the literalism in interpreting the Biblical records, which is fashionable today among some Israeli scholars, is bound to limit the value of this atlas for use among American and European students. Is it really legitimate, for instance, to include a map of Samson carrying the gates of Gaza to Hebron, and maps showing so exactly how Jesus went to Nain, or from Capernaum to the Mount of Transfiguration, which is identified with Mount Tabor? Some of the routes proposed for the New Testament are very odd, and one must wonder upon what evidence the authors assert that Philip baptized the Ethiopian Eunuch just outside Jerusalem, or why they took Jesus so confidently on a journey through Dion and Abila east of the Jordan! The weakness of such detailed historical reconstruction is that it is apt to set down as fact more than we have authority to say.

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SOMETHING NEW FOR SOMETHING OLD

An Axiom and its Application

'No one can explain, by himself, a prophecy of Scripture', wrote the author of 2 Peter. What he meant, of course, was that no one could properly understand any passage of Scripture apart from its setting in the life, thought, and history of the believing community; and any attempt to do so was playing into the hands of false teachers. Not all people have followed this sound advice, but perhaps the most notorious of those who have done otherwise was the heretic Marcion, who came to Rome about A.D. 140. From reading the Pauline writings he concluded that the God of wrath and vengeance spoken of in the Old Testament was in no wise the same God of love and forgiveness referred to in the Pauline writings. Therefore, Marcion rejected the entire Old Testament and most of the New Testament, accepting only the Pauline epistles (exclusive of the pastorals) along with a pruned edition of the Gospel of Luke.

What Marcion did has been duplicated, on a much smaller scale, by well-intentioned translators from time to time. How does the translator do this grievous thing? Every time he attempts to force the interpretation of one Gospel upon another, to harmonize, to add basically irrelevant material, or to skew data according to his own particular theological orientation, he becomes guilty of this sin. Perhaps no translator can be absolutely free from wrongly rendering some passage in the course of his work, but errors can be brought to a minimum by following the axiom set out in 2 Peter 1: 21. That is, *in translating one must seek to understand the historical, cultural, linguistic, and theological settings of the Biblical passage under consideration.*

It is the purpose of this article to indicate how this axiom should be applied in the exegesis and translation of a given passage, taking the oft translated Christmas story of Luke 2 as a point of departure. Due to limitations of space, the considerations presented will necessarily be of a rather general nature, but the detailed implications are in the process of being worked out in a forthcoming book on New Testament backgrounds for translators.

I. Graeco-Roman World of the First Century

It becomes immediately obvious that the translator must know something about the historical and cultural setting of the Graeco-Roman world of the first century A.D. if he is to understand sufficiently the background of Luke's Gospel. The Gospel is written in the *lingua franca* of that day; dispersed throughout the entire work are both technical and non-technical terms taken from Roman commercial, military, and political life. A miscellany of other less obvious indications of the Graeco-Roman way of life lie hidden, waiting to be brought to light by further investigation and research.¹ Luke himself realized the necessity of giving his readers a proper historical perspective and so oriented them from the very outset of his Gospel.

At that time Emperor Augustus sent out an order for all the citizens of the Empire to register themselves for the census. When this first census took place, Quirinius was the governor of Syria (2: 1-3).

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It was the fifteenth year of the rule of Emperor Tiberius; Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea, Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the territory of Iturea and Trachonitis; Lysanias was ruler of Abilene, and Annas and Chaiphaz were high priests (3: 1-3).

But Luke's interest in historical details is not limited to the beginning of his Gospel. He relates the death of Christ to the judgment of Pilate (23: 1-5) and in four other places makes allusions to Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great: Herod arrests John the Baptist (3: 19-20), Joanna, the wife of an officer in Herod's court, becomes a believer (8:3), Herod trembles at the report of Christ's activities (9:7-9), he is called a fox by Jesus (13: 32), and, at last, he has the chance to dispel his fears by seeing Jesus for himself (23: 6-12). One cannot help but notice that Luke, like the other Biblical writers, takes history seriously,² and so must the translator if he is to remain faithful to the spirit in which these writings were produced. If Luke felt it

¹ See the brief but informative discussion, 'The Galilean Narrative and the Graeco-Roman World', by A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Law in the New Testament*. For general studies on this subject, A. C. Bouquet, *Everyday Life in New Testament Times*, and Henri Daniel Rops, *Daily Life in New Testament Times*; both of these make interesting reading, and whereas the former is slanted more toward the Graeco-Roman society, the latter is more oriented toward Palestinian life, though each book touches on both areas.

² Several monographs and numerous articles have been written relevant to Luke's understanding of history: perhaps the most noted is that of Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*.

important to remind the readers of his own day of the larger historical *milieu* in which these events took place, how much more important is it to be kept in mind by the contemporary translator who is removed by almost twenty centuries from the time of these events.

It is not the present author's intention to discuss the various aspects of the Graeco-Roman culture as these appear on the pages of Luke's Gospel; for the time being it will suffice merely to remind the translator that this is an area that he must be prepared to deal with in an honest and forthright manner. One glaring illustration from chapter 2 is the entire issue of the census and especially the Quirinius problem (2: 2).¹ How is the translator going to react when he confronts this difficulty? Assuming that Luke has made a chronological miscue, a number of translators have either altered the text or else have given the text a forced interpretation.² Neither of these pseudo-solutions fulfils the role of the translator, and certainly neither of these is in keeping with the spirit of the Third Gospel. Both attempts suggest some sort of hysteria brought about because the translator has possibly failed to grasp the nature and purpose of historiography as understood by the historians in Luke's day.³ It is always the task of the translator to let the Bible say what it says in the most natural way possible, and, at the same time, to realize that the Biblical writers may have had an entirely different viewpoint of the writing of history than many translators today!

II. Jewish Life and Customs in Jesus' Day

More important even than the Graeco-Roman setting for the understanding of Luke 2 is that of the Jewish religious life and customs, reflections of which may be seen throughout this chapter. Although the census is definitely Roman, the custom of going to one's home town for registration (v. 3) is in keeping with Jewish tradition. That Mary was not the wife of Joseph, but was only 'promised in marriage' to him (v. 5) presupposes a certain knowledge about Jewish customs relating to engagement and marriage. Unless one is conversant with these customs, he certainly cannot receive the full impact of the statement that Mary was pregnant (v. 5b). Several religious requirements are mentioned in succession in verses 21-24. Although circumcision is known to many cultures throughout the world, the particular religious significance attached to this custom is unique within Judaism (see Gen. 17: 9-14). The next two ceremonies are difficult to separate unless one is familiar with Jewish regulations surrounding birth, and especially the birth of the first son. Luke's account does not clarify for the reader the distinction between the purification restrictions and regulations imposed upon a woman who had just given birth (2: 24—see Lev. 12) and the require-

¹ For the latest survey of the Quirinius problem, Georg Ogg, 'The Quirinius Question Today', *Expository Times*, LXXIX (May 1968), pp.231-6. For a recent constructive approach by a historian, Sherwin-White, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-71.

² See Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Luke*, pp. 50-1.

³ For history as viewed by Luke's contemporaries, see Robert Dentan, *The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East*. The short discussion by L. H. Grollenberg, *Atlas of the Bible*, p. 27, is insightful and most valuable.

ment for the 'redemption of the first son' (2: 23—see Exod. 13: 1–16). What is the significance of the Feast of Passover and the taking of the boy Jesus to the Temple when he was twelve (vv. 41–52)? All of these are expressions of Jewish customs which the translator must recognize in order to translate the meaning clearly.¹

Beyond these rather obvious considerations are the contents of Simeon's prayer (vv. 29–32), Anna's words of praise (v. 38), and the message of the angels (vv. 10–14), all of which assume a thorough grounding in the Jewish messianic expectations, for the one of whom they all speak is 'the Lord's promised Messiah' (v. 26) who has come to 'redeem Israel' (v. 38) and bring 'peace on earth to men with whom God is pleased' (v. 14). How can one interpret and thus translate such passages unless he has become fully aware of the manner in which these concepts were understood by first century Judaism and reinterpreted by the early Christians?²

III. The Christian Context of the Gospel

The translator must keep the Christian context of the Gospel in focus. The Gospels were written to proclaim the significance of the Good News to the world, and for this reason they are other than mere biographical accounts of our Lord's earthly ministry. The early Christian community was not primarily concerned about the fact that Christ died, but rather that *he died for our sins*. That is to say, from the very beginning the authors of the Gospels, as the other New Testament writers, *interpreted* the meaning of the events they recorded. Indeed, any good historian, whether he records secular or sacred history, is also an interpreter of the events he relates. He chooses to give emphasis to one happening and to pass by another without mention. This very fact is conditioned by the meaning he perceives in the events about which he is making record.

The Gospels were not written immediately after the climax of Jesus' ministry. Mark, the earliest of the Gospels, was written about A.D. 65; Matthew and Luke about ten or fifteen years later; while the Gospel of John is generally dated close to the end of the first century. During this period before the writing of the Gospels the information about the person of Jesus, his teachings, and his deeds was circulated primarily by word of mouth, though perhaps on occasion accompanied by a few brief written sources. As John realized, it would have been impossible to record in a book (or to relate by word of mouth) all of the many things our Lord did and taught during the course of his lifetime (John 20: 30–31). Therefore, those who told about these things were *selective* in what they repeated (see Luke 1: 1–4). To a man who had once been a notorious sinner, the words of our Lord regarding forgiveness might be remembered as well as a parable or an event from Jesus' ministry that vivified his teaching concerning forgiveness. Someone else might be impressed by one of the mighty deeds performed

¹ For a detailed discussion of the topics touched on in this paragraph, see Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*.

² For a non-technical, but very helpful, survey of these concepts in Jewish thought of the early Christian and pre-Christian era, Norman Snaith, *The Jews from Cyrus to Herod*, pp. 88–114.

by our Lord out of compassion for human need. No doubt the most impressive and at once the most significant for the earliest Christian community were the stories concerning the passion and resurrection; and the majority of New Testament scholars believe these were the first part of the Gospels to have been arranged in order as we know it presently. But even here the materials differ from Gospel to Gospel, indicating both a *choice* and a *limitation* on the part of the various writers. A choice because each selected from the traditions available to him; and a limitation because each man could select only from what information he had at hand, whether from eye-witnesses or from other sources.

Even before the Gospels were written this process of selection had been going on. The earliest Christians were Jews, and their heritage demanded that sacred Scriptures be read in their worship services; accordingly, they not only found passages in the Old Testament that could be interpreted as referring to our Lord (e.g. Matt. 1: 23; 2: 6, 18), but they desired to have selections relating to the person and ministry of the Lord himself. Thus, one of the earliest influences on the writing of the Gospels was the demands of Christian worship.

Another factor which gave impetus to the writing of the Gospels was the desire to demonstrate to the world in general and to the Roman government in particular that the Christian movement was not inspired by one who had been an insurrectionist. Although Jesus had been condemned by the Jewish court for other reasons (Mark 14: 53-72; Matt. 26: 57-75; Luke 22: 54-71), the charges brought against him before Pilate were those of attempting to establish himself as the Jewish Messianic king and speaking against Roman taxation (see especially Luke 23: 2-5, but also Mark 15: 2-5 and Matt. 27: 11-14), both of which would have been seditious in the thinking of the Roman governor. Of course, neither of these charges was true, but the Jewish leaders could never have gained a hearing before the Roman court on the basis of the charges they had made against him in their earlier nocturnal gathering before the Sanhedrin. Consequently, it fell to the Church to place these events in proper perspective.

A few passages in the New Testament suggest the existence of a group of the disciples of John the Baptist who thought he was superior to Jesus. After all, John had come before Jesus, historically speaking, and Jesus was baptized by John. Besides this there are indications that Jesus himself may have been a disciple of John before he began his own public ministry. The Gospel writers speak to show the true relationship between Jesus and John, Jesus was in reality 'before' John (John 1: 15); John was not the Light, but merely a witness to the Light (John 1: 8); and even though he was baptized by John, John himself realized the superiority of Jesus (Matt. 3: 14; John 1: 29-34).

Related to the problem that the Church faced from the followers of John the Baptist was that of the Jewish rejection of Jesus as the long-awaited Savior of Israel. Why did the Jewish nation reject him if he was truly the one whom God had sent? It had to be shown that throughout the course of its history Israel had always rejected those prophets whom God had sent (see Stephen's speech in Acts 7 and the parable of the Great Supper,

Matt. 22: 2–10; Luke 14: 16–24). Furthermore, Jesus' deeds (John 5: 36; Matt. 12: 28], the Scriptures (John 5: 39), and the Father himself (John 5: 37) bore witness to the truth of Jesus' person. Rejection was to be expected, and merely indicated that the Jewish nation was following the same route it had always pursued in turning away the messengers of God.

Finally, the most important factor involved in the writing of the Gospels is the desire to give answer to the question, 'Who is Jesus Christ?'. All other considerations are subservient to this one, and the Gospel writers felt that the whole world must be brought to this truth. Rejection, suffering, and death, rather than the contrary, had been indications of Jesus' divine nature and calling. And, as his resurrection had proved, he is now at the 'right hand of God' with all the heavenly beings below him in dignity and power. Presently he is the Lord of history, and at the end of history it will be declared to all men that he was the one through whom God brought the universe into being and the one through whom God would determine the destinies of all men. 'Jesus Christ is Lord'—this is the basic proclamation of the Gospels.

For the most part the Christian community at the time of the writing of the Gospels was situated in a different environment than that of the first Christians, most of whom had been Jews living on Jewish soil. The Gospel had now moved into the Gentile world, and the Evangelists sought to make clear that the message and person of Jesus were relevant for the lives of persons coming from different historical and cultural heritages. In the course of bringing the Good News to Gentiles certain things took place which meant the inevitable transformation of the material in the Gospels.¹ This in part, though not altogether, accounts for some of the differences in the traditions of the respective Gospels; four will be mentioned now:

(1) One very evident change is that of the language of the message itself. The mother-tongue of Jesus had been Aramaic, but the Gospels as we now have them are in Greek. Although the significance of this observation is evaluated differently by various scholars, it is something not to be forgotten, and from time to time may be helpful in the interpretation of obscure and difficult passages.

(2) The setting and the life are now primarily non-Jewish. Mark, for example, records the statement of Jesus regarding divorce as it existed in the Roman world, where the woman had the right along with the man to divorce the marriage partner (Mark 10: 12). Even though it is not impossible that Jesus would have spoken in these terms, it is not likely that he would have done so in the context of a controversy with the Pharisees regarding marriage (v. 2), even though Mark locates the dialogue 'on the other side of the Jordan' (v. 1). Elsewhere Mark translates the Aramaic words of Jesus for his Gentile readers (5: 41; 7: 11, 34; 15: 22) and explains the Jewish ritual washing (7: 3, 4). According to Luke the healing of the lame man

¹ For a full treatment of the transformations that the parables of Jesus underwent in the course of transmission and writing, Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (revised edition), pp. 1–114. Frank W. Beare, in 'Concerning Jesus of Nazareth', *The Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXXXVII (June 1968), pp. 125–35, points out that Jeremias's conclusions are relevant for other parts of the Gospels as well.

carried by his four friends took place in a house of *Roman* construction with a tile roof (5: 19). These and other indications reveal the garment in which the Gospel is now clothed.

(3) Sometimes Jesus' audience is different from what appears to have been the original setting of his polemical words; many of his sayings are now directed toward disciples rather than to his opponents, the Scribes and Pharisees. It seems quite unlikely that Jesus would have characterized his disciples as 'evil' (Matt. 7: 11); it is much more likely that he would have directed such a retort to the Pharisees, especially in the light of Matt. 12: 34, where almost the same utterance comprises a frontal attack on the Pharisees, and in the light of the observation that in Matt. 7: 11b there is a striking change from the second to the third person: 'As evil as *you* are . . . your Father in heaven will give good things to *those who ask him*.' This change from the second to the third person suggests that in the original context Jesus may have distinguished between the Pharisees who were evil (the 'you' of 7: 11b) and his disciples ('those who ask' of 7: 11b).¹ This type of change is nothing more than one would expect; the minister of today applies the words of Scripture to his contemporary situation; and it is quite likely that this shift of audience was made at a time when in the life of the Church the opponents of Jesus were not so great a concern to the Evangelists as were the needs of the Christian community.

(4) The Church of the Gospels is becoming more institutionalized than the Church of Jesus' day. Compare the confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi in Mark (8: 27-33) and in Matthew (16: 13-20). According to Mark, Peter's confession, 'You are the Messiah', is based upon the assumption that Jesus was the earthly, political Messiah of Jewish expectation. This is straightway rejected by Jesus, as is indicated by his rebuke of Peter (vv. 30, 33) and by his speaking of himself not as the Messiah but as the suffering Son of Man (v. 31). On the other hand, the Gospel of Matthew interprets the words of the apostle in the light of the full Christian recognition that the Messiahship of Jesus means he is the Son of the living God (v. 16). Therefore, Jesus praises Peter and gives him the position of leadership in the Church (vv. 17-19). Two chapters later in Matthew's Gospel is the section sometimes called the 'Manual of Church Order and Discipline' (Matt. 18). In both of these passages Matthew is evidently describing the *actual situation* as it existed *in his own day*. In the Christian community from which the Gospel of Matthew originates Peter is looked upon as its founder, and the Church has developed to such a degree that guidance for church order and discipline is felt necessary. Thus Matthew repeats not the exact words of our Lord, but under the leadership of the Spirit makes the implications of Christ's teachings relevant for the Church of his own day. Mark too believes that Jesus is the Son of God (14: 61, 62; 15: 39), but he does not imply that this is what Peter meant when he declared at Caesarea Philippi that Jesus was the Messiah. Mark then writes more from the viewpoint of the actual historical situation as it existed at the time of Peter's confession; Matthew writes from the standpoint of what Peter later discovered concerning the full meaning of Jesus' Messiahship. The translator must not

¹ A. T. Cadoux, *The Parables of Jesus*, pp. 76 f as quoted in Jeremias, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

attempt at this point or at any other place to bring Matthew or Mark into a false agreement with the other; both are valuable because of their individual witness and because of the diversity of perspective and richness of interpretation that they offer the contemporary Christian community.

IV. The Author's Purpose

Of no less importance to the translator is the purpose of the author who is being translated. Many times parallel passages in the Gospels and elsewhere have been forced into an artificial conformity with one another merely because the translator has failed to realize that each Biblical author utilized his sources with a purpose unique to himself. The account of Jesus' rejection at Nazareth as it appears in Mark (6: 1-6), Matthew (13: 54-58) and Luke (4: 16-30) will aptly demonstrate this statement. Two observations make it clear that Mark has intentionally placed this earlier in his outline of Jesus' ministry than has Luke: (1) Mark locates the earliest activities of Jesus in and near the environs of Capernaum and does not record a visit of Jesus to Nazareth until relatively late in his Galilean ministry (1: 21; 6: 1); and (2) Luke certainly knows of a previous activity of Jesus in Capernaum to which he alludes (4: 23) but which he does not incorporate into his account.¹

Are there any hints as to Luke's reason for treating his sources in this fashion? Perhaps Luke intends this passage to reveal *by way of anticipation* what is to come throughout the remainder of his Gospel, since he incorporates a number of motifs into this account that are an essential part of his work: the rejection of our Lord by his own people (vv. 23-24, 28-30) and his consequent mission to the Gentiles (vv. 24-27), God's concern for the poor and outcast (v. 18), especially for helpless women (vv. 25-26), the activity of the Spirit (v. 18), and the fulfilment of prophecy in terms of its relevance to Gentile readers (v. 21). Moreover, it is quite likely that this is exactly the same thing that he has done in his record of the experience at Pentecost which serves essentially the same purpose in the book of Acts as the rejection at Nazareth fulfils in the structure of the Gospel. For the recognition of the universal nature of the Gospel comes in conjunction with the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, but it takes the leadership of the Jerusalem congregation a long while to accept this truth (Strange indeed, if the Pentecost account is to be understood otherwise!). The admission that Pentecost is, so to speak, proleptic in the structure of Acts will also go a long way in resolving the so-called contradiction between the account of the giving of the Spirit in Acts and in John (20: 22). Thus it is that in both his writings Luke utilizes the methodology of introducing one event at the beginning that will serve as a key to what follows: in the Gospel it is the rejection of Jesus at Nazareth, while in Acts it is the experience at Pentecost.

That the judgments of the above paragraph are correct can be demonstrated by a brief glimpse into certain aspects of the Gospel of Luke as they are reflected in these two accounts. It is true that Luke is not overly concerned about the fulfilment of prophecy since his main readers are manifestly

¹ William Manson, *The Gospel of Luke*, pp. 40-1.

Gentiles, but in the account of the rejection at Nazareth he is the *only* one of the three writers to mention this fact, and it is enlightening to note that the fulfilment of prophecy is also appealed to in the Pentecost account (Acts 2: 16, 25, 31, 34). Furthermore, there are at least four other places in the Gospel where Jesus' mention of the fulfilment of prophecy would hold relevance for Gentile readers. The first is in reference to Isa. 40: 3, which is also quoted in all the other Gospels (Matt. 3: 3; Mark 1: 3; John 1: 23), but with one difference: Luke is the only one of the four to include Isaiah's hope that '*All mankind* will see God's salvation' (Luke 3: 6; Isa. 40: 5). The destruction of Jerusalem and of the Jewish cult is the fulfilment of Scripture (21: 20 ff.), and in the overall view of Luke's Gospel this is a direct result of the Jewish rejection of the Lord. Isa. 53: 12, a passage not quoted in any other of the Gospels, most closely identifies Christ with the outcast whom he came to redeem (22: 37). Finally, the appeal to the fulfilment of the 'Law of Moses, the writings of the Prophets, and the Psalms' (Luke 24: 44) relates first to the Lord's death and resurrection, but beyond that to the proclamation of the Gospel to *all nations* (24: 46-47).

The book of Acts has sometimes been called the 'Acts of the Holy Spirit' because of the prominence of the Spirit; but the Gospel shows no less an interest in the activity of the Spirit. Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, is told concerning his son, 'From his very birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit' (Luke 1: 15). Mary's child will be called the Son of God because the Holy Spirit will come upon her (1: 35). When Mary visited Elizabeth, Elizabeth was 'filled with the Holy Spirit' and exclaimed, 'Blessed are you among women' (1: 41-42). At the birth of John, 'his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied' (1: 67). In the course of Jesus' presentation in the Temple it is said of Simeon, 'the Holy Spirit was with him, and he had been assured by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's promised Messiah'. So 'led by the Spirit', he entered the Temple to praise the holy child (2: 25b-27). However, Luke's interest in the Spirit is not limited to the initial two chapters of his Gospel. Although all three of the Synoptics indicate that Jesus was 'led by the Spirit' during his temptations (Matt. 4: 1; Mark 1: 12; Luke 4: 1), it is only Luke who adds that Jesus was at that time 'filled with the Spirit' (4: 1a); and it is Luke again who indicates that Jesus began his Galilean ministry 'in the power of the Spirit' (4: 14). And whereas Matthew's Gospel promises the heavenly Father will give 'good things' to those who ask him (7: 11), according to the Gospel of Luke the Father's gift to those who ask is the Holy Spirit (11: 13).

Manifest throughout Luke's Gospel is God's concern for the poor and needy. According to Matthew, Jesus gives his blessing to the 'poor in spirit', that is to those who recognize their spiritual poverty (5: 3), while in Luke the same blessing is bestowed upon the *poor* (6: 20). Luke alone relates the parable of the rich fool (12: 13-21) and of Lazarus and the rich man (16: 19-31), both of which warn against the danger of riches and speak indirectly of the value of poverty for one's spiritual life. Following the parable of the dishonest steward (16: 1-8) are Christ's words concerning the proper use of money (16: 9-12); and the combination suggests that Luke

sees in the desire to have possessions a threat to one's security within the Kingdom. Rich Zacchaeus discovers that he must give half of what he owns to the poor (19: 8). Yet for Luke the poor are not merely those without wealth, but the downtrodden of the earth, no matter what the reason (note the story of the Pharisee and the sinner, 18: 9-14). Especially do women fit into this category, since in Jewish and Gentile society alike they shared a lesser status than men and were often a symbol of helplessness. So Jesus raises the only son of the widow of Nain (7: 11-17); he forgives the penitent woman who enters the home of Simon the Pharisee (7: 36-50); women come to minister to him (8: 1-3); he heals a cripple woman (13: 10-17); and he addresses the weeping women of Jerusalem (23: 27-31).

Luke underscores the truth that the Good News is for all peoples. Since this has been touched upon already, it is requisite only to elaborate this point with two further passages from Luke. In the account of the sending out of the twelve (9: 1-6), it is not without moment that Luke omits the injunction of Jesus for them not to go to the Gentiles but to go merely to the lost sheep of Israel (see Matt. 10: 5-6); nor is it insignificant that Luke adds a further account of the sending out of disciples, and this second account concerns *seventy* rather than twelve (10: 1-20). This increase from twelve (the number of the tribes of Israel) to seventy (the number of nations on the earth according to Genesis 10) is an overt manifestation of Luke's universal concerns.¹

V. The Immediate Context of Luke 1-2

When the translator approaches any single part or the whole of Luke 2, he must keep in mind that it belongs to the larger section, chapters 1-2. It has long since become an axiom of New Testament studies that these two chapters comprised a unit before being incorporated into Luke's Gospel. Even though the exact origin of the source or sources from which Luke got the material for these chapters is not agreed upon, it is acknowledged that everywhere they reflect an Aramaic background; and because of this observation many students of the Scriptures have concluded that these two chapters were originally written in Aramaic for believers in and around Jerusalem. For this reason the translator must not only familiarize himself with the many Jewish religious customs alluded to, but he must also be prepared to recognize the Semitic Greek forms in which this material is presented. The many Hebraic idioms that Luke translated literally were fully intelligible to his readers who were immersed in the Hebrew Bible or else had heard the Greek Bible read in the synagogues. But for contemporary languages, removed in time and cultural expression from first century Judaism, a literal carry over of the same idioms produces both an ineffectual and an *unfaithful* rendering of the original.

Consider a few of the Hebraisms in chapters 1-2. Surely the now famous *kai egeneto* (and its alternative forms *egeneto de* and *egeneto*), literally 'and

¹ Some manuscripts of Luke have *seventy* and others have *seventy-two*; but the conclusion reached is valid whichever reading is followed, since in Genesis 10 the Hebrew Bible catalogues seventy nations and the Greek Bible lists seventy-two nations.

it happened', would never be reproduced word for word by a present-day translator. Is it any longer necessary to point out that this is a literal rendering of the Hebrew *wayyehi* and is used by Luke (and other New Testament writers) as a transitional, serving merely to introduce, climax, or conclude a narrative?¹ Another frequent Hebraism in Luke 1-2 is *kai idou*, literally 'and behold'. Although less frequent than the former idiom, this is quite obviously a Hebraism taken over from Septuagint usage and is essentially a particle indicating emphasis. Sometimes it is best left untranslated (see TEV and Goodspeed at Luke 1: 31) if the emphasis can be made otherwise. The use of *enōpion* is a third Hebraism, corresponding to the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew expression 'before the face of (somebody)'. In Luke 1: 15 it means 'in the Lord's sight/judgment', while in 1: 19 the idea is that Gabriel stands 'in the presence of' God (see also 1: 75, 76). *Kata prosōpon*, a related idiom, literally 'according to the face of (somebody)', has the meaning in 2: 31 of being 'in the presence of (all peoples)'. These and other Hebraisms constantly remind the translator of Luke 1-2 that he is in the midst of a Semitic Greek source which must be understood as such if the translation is to be both natural and accurate in the receptor language.

No doubt one of the underlying concerns of Luke in chapters 1-2 is to relate the events surrounding our Lord's conception and birth and at the same time to counteract false notions regarding his person.² Of the New Testament writers only Matthew and Luke seem interested in this particular phase of our Lord's life. Paul constantly affirms the Lord's divine nature and is also concerned with the genuineness of his humanity, for he mentions his birth through a woman (Gal. 4: 4). But Paul gives no details regarding the manner of his conception. On the other hand, if one had only the Gospel of Mark to read, what might he conclude about the person of Jesus Christ? It is possible, depending upon the presuppositions with which one reads, to conclude that Jesus became the Son of God at his baptism when the Holy Spirit descended upon him (1: 10), a conclusion that denies a real incarnation. Was the underlying purpose of Luke then to give a more complete description of our Lord's nature by relating the experiences concerning his conception and birth? Evidently this is the case, for the generation by the Holy Spirit is the means by which Luke validates his *deity* (Luke 1: 35), whereas the conception on the part of a woman verifies his genuine *humanity*. Indeed Luke is as much concerned to emphasize the fact of his humanity as he is to propound the truth of his divine origin, for it is Luke among the Evangelists who informs us that 'Jesus grew up, both in body and in wisdom, gaining favor with God and man' (2: 52). Elsewhere in Luke's Gospel he underscores the humanity of Jesus in parallel passages with Matthew and Mark, who fail to do so at that particular time. At the baptism Luke states that the 'Holy Spirit came down upon him in *bodily* form, like a dove' (3: 22). By this brief

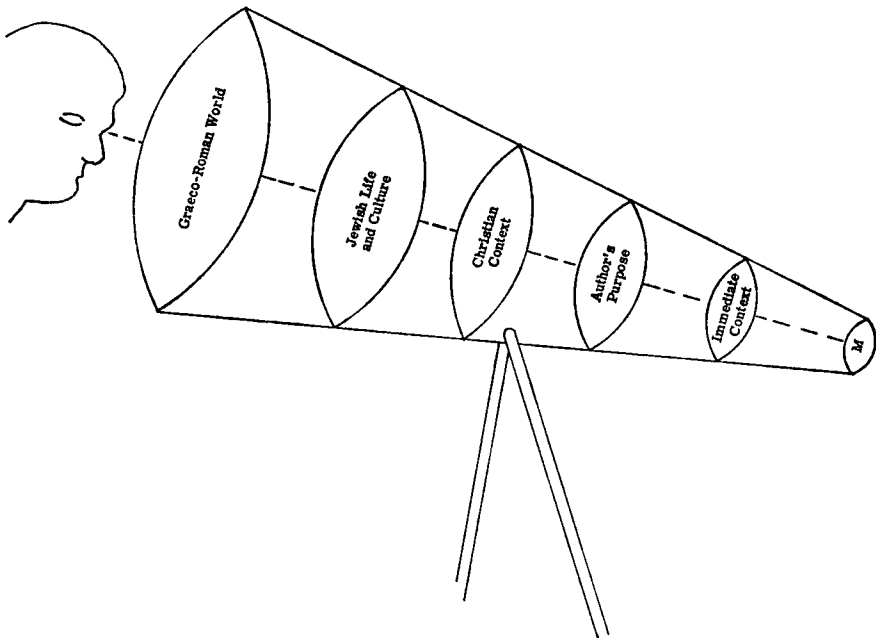
¹ See the excellent article by J. Reiling, 'The Use and Translation of *kai egeneto*, "and it happened", in the New Testament', *The Bible Translator*, vol. 16 (1965), pp. 153-63; also see Plummer, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

² On the possibility that Luke has an anti-gnostic purpose involved in his writings, see Charles H. Talbert, *Luke and the Gnostics*. Dr Talbert's latest work on Luke 1-2 appeared in the January 1968 issue of *New Testament Studies*, but as yet is unavailable to the present writer.

addition to the account of the baptism, Luke denies the possibility of interpreting the account in mythological or mystical terms, and by so doing affirms the genuine corporeality of Christ's body. In his resurrection account Luke again underlines the physical reality of Christ's resurrection body in two passages. After his resurrection he 'breaks bread' with Cleopas and another unnamed disciple on the way to Emmaus (24: 30). Then, soon after, the Lord himself attests to the physical nature of his body by appearing to his disciples, showing them his body of 'flesh and bones', and eating a piece of fish (24: 36-43). Although the Gospel of John goes a step beyond Matthew and Luke by mentioning the eternal origin of our Lord (1: 1-18), the purpose of Luke in these chapters 1-2 seems to have been accomplished if he describes the nature of our Lord's person by recounting the experiences relating to his conception and birth. Therefore, when translating Luke 2 it is necessary to keep in mind the undergirding aim of Luke in this passage, or else one might be prone to force interpretations that are out of keeping with Luke's overall and immediate purpose.

VI. Summary

Perhaps the main points of this paper can best be summarized by using a picture. In the illustration, M represents the source-language message that



the translator must understand in order to translate. But he cannot see the message clearly unless he views it through several 'lenses', gradually bringing the message into focus. Each lense must itself be in focus, otherwise the message cannot be seen in its proper perspective. And if the understanding of the source-language message is inaccurate, the translation will surely be faulty, no matter how well-versed the translator is in the language and culture of the people for whom he is translating.

HENRY OSBORN

THE WARAO SELF

This paper grew out of a discussion between the author and Dr Jacob Loewen during a consultation session on Warao translation problems, when fresh avenues of investigation were suggested with a view to adding to the areas where terms had already been collected for the Warao 'self'. At the time, Dr Loewen was preparing a paper which later appeared as 'A Mennonite Encounter with the "Innermost"', The Mennonite Quarterly Review, Goshen, Indiana, January 1965, pp. 40-67. A somewhat different version of the present paper, in Spanish, is being submitted to Boletín Indigenista Venezolana. The Warao live primarily in the Orinoco Delta of Venezuela and in surrounding areas. The orthography in this paper is the practical one used for printing: |j| = [h]; initial |r| = [d].

After our plane from interior Venezuela had landed at Maiquetía airport we were swept up the four-lane *autopista* by car toward Caracas, round wide curves and through fluorescent lighted tunnels. As we flashed from a tunnel mouth into the sunshine my Warao companion Alberto commented, 'It is more than my *obojona* can know. I have left it behind.'

Diego is not able to control his outbursts of temper because his *obojona* is like that. This does not prevent his *obonobu* from making excellent dug-out canoes.

Eduardo did not think it was possible to be reconciled to his cousin because 'his *kobe* is bad and he will not change'.

The wizened old shaman died but his wife lived in terror for months because he had promised that his *mejokoji* would return to follow her around.

* * *

In Warao the self has four parts: emotional self, *kobe*; thought-self, *obonobu*; personality-self, *obojona*; and likeness-self, *mejokoji*.

The terms for 'birth' and 'dream' seem to be related to spirit phenomena rather than to the self.

Physically, *rijawara* is 'birth', the actual birth of a child; metaphysically, *rijawara* is the manifestation of a spirit-being or a group of spirit-beings. Most of the manifestations recorded in the data are celestial phenomena