



"Adoration of the Shepherds" from *The Life of Christ* by Carl Heinrich Bloch (1834-90)

4a. The Lucan Infancy Narrative

Literary foils, the role of Mary, gender pairs, and canticles.

Angels from the Realms of Glory <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ud0b0t8s>

“Angels We Have Heard on High” (Hymn no. 203)

1. Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains.

(Chorus)
Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

2. Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
Which inspire your heav'nly song?

3. Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.

The Lucan Diptych

- Luke's Infancy Narrative consists of two interwoven stories: that of **John the Baptist** and that of **Jesus**
- **Literary foil**: comparisons and contrasts that emphasize important themes and images
- **Similarities**
 - Both conceptions are miraculous, both are preceded by annunciations, both births are unusual
- **Differences**
 - John's conception is miraculous, but Jesus' is miraculous and divine, Zacharias and Mary respond differently, Elizabeth gives birth at home surrounded by friends and family while Mary gives birth in a strange place surrounded by strangers; Zacharias prophecies at John's birth but angels sing at Jesus'

4a. The Lucan Infancy Narrative

1/13/2016

3



"Annunciation of the Virgin Mary" from *The Life of Christ* by Carl Heinrich Bloch (1834-90)

Luke's Infancy Narrative

Doublets: John the Baptist and Jesus

- **Birth of John the Baptist Foretold** (1:5-25)
- **Birth of Jesus Foretold** (Annunciation, 1:26-38)
 - Concerning this passage, Harold B. Lee once declared that "We need not question His [God's] methods to accomplish His purposes" (Williams, *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, 14).
- The **Visitation** (Mary visits Elizabeth, 1:39-56)
 - canticle: *Magnificat* (1:46-55, "My soul doth magnify the Lord")
- **Birth of John the Baptist** (1:57-80)
 - canticle: *Benedictus* (1:68-79, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel")
- **Birth of Jesus** (2:1-7)
- Shepherds and Angels: **Annunciation to Adoration of the Shepherds** (8-20)
 - canticle: *Gloria in excelsis* (2:14, "Glory to God in the highest")
- **The Presentation** (Jesus named and temple requirements fulfilled, 2:21-40)
 - canticle: *Nunc demittis* (2:29-32, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace")
- The Boy Jesus Teaches in the Temple (2:41-52)

4a. The Lucan Infancy Narrative

1/13/2016

4

Lucan Themes and Characters



Greg Olsen, "A Light to the Gentiles"

4a. The Lucan Infancy Narrative

- **Christ in salvation history** (*Heilsgeschichte*)
 - God working in **Israel**, God **working in the person of Jesus**, God working **in the Church**
 - chs. 1-2 represent OT history
 - *Luke writes in an the style of the Septuagint to give his Infancy Narrative and OT feel!*
- **Gender Pairs: Righteous Israel has a part in Christ:** Luke portrays these couples as "just," that is, living in harmony with Mosaic law
 - **Zechariah and Elizabeth**
 - **Joseph and Mary**
 - **Simeon and Anna**
- **Role of Women**
 - **Marian focus:** angels come to Mary (in Matthew, dreams came to Joseph)
 - confinement details, women's relationships, details of Christ's youth

1/13/2016

5

Exegetical Discursus: Lucan Canticles

- **Canticle:** simply "a song," and especially a liturgical song taken from the Bible
- **Historical Questions** (*diachronic exegesis*: how the text originated and how it came to be in its current form)
 - Actual, inspired hymns sung by the character at the time? How did Luke learn them?
 - Early Christian hymns reflecting the sentiments of the character? Lucan compositions?
- **Literary Questions** (*synchronic exegesis*: what is the text's current form, structure, and rhetorical approach)
 - Genre: poetic expression of praise, specifically a **canticle**
 - Serves a parallel function in Luke to a **Matthean formula quotation**
 - Structure: hymn format, poetic
 - Example: Magnificat has an introduction praising God, a body listing motives for praise, a conclusion (this usually includes a blessing or a request)
 - Rhetorical approach: **personalizes the characters, ties NT characters to OT themes, etc.**
- **Theological Questions** (*existential exegesis*: what does this text teach us about Jesus? How does it engage and affect the reader?)
 - How does it reflect Mary's testimony of who her son was?
 - How do you feel when reading these songs?

4a. The Lucan Infancy Narrative

1/13/2016

6



Misconceptions Quicklist (Luke)

- “. . . a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world the world should be taxed (enrolled)”
 - Judea was not a Roman province at the time
 - No empire-wide census is known
- Supposition: this census is intended as an accurate date marker
 - P. Sulpicius Quirinus (“Cyrenius”) was legate of Syria in A.D. 6 (Herod died in 4 B.C.)
- Supposition: the inn (or *katalyma*) was necessarily a hostel or a caravansary
 - the same word is used in Luke 22:11 for the upper room of the Last Supper (a guest chamber)
- Supposition: the manger (or *phatnē*) was primarily a sign of humility
 - lexically it was a reference to Isaiah 1:3 “The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner’s manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.” (NIV)
- Supposition: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.”
 - *the Greek at 2:13 actually reads “and on earth peace to those of good will” or “towards those for whom God has good will”*