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POINT OF VIEW IN THE CENTRAL SECTION OF LUKE (9:51-19:44)

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Numerous studies[1] have attempted to solve the perplexing problem posed by the central section of Luke's gospel: its purpose. In this brief essay I will attempt to show that the purpose of a part of Luke's central section is to present in sharp relief two conflicting ideological points of view—the view of Jesus, and the view opposed to his. Before Jesus moves into Jerusalem and toward the passion the reader is shown two distinct worldviews or systems of ideas. Why the author chooses to illustrate the two ideological points of view is outside the scope of this essay, nor is it within the context of this essay to examine every narrative within the central section. I have selected one narrative, 14:14-33, as a test case to demonstrate the thesis.

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[1]Among some of the diverse analyses of the central section are the following:

(1) Several journeys to Jerusalem: C. J. Cadoux, "The Visits of Jesus to Jerusalem," *Expositor* 9 S. 3 (1925) 175-192; E. J. Cook, "Synoptic Indications of the Visits of Jesus to Jerusalem," *Exp Tim* 41 (1929-30) 121-123; L. C. Girard, *L'Evangile des voyages de Jésus, ou la section 9:51-18:14 de Saint Luc* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1951).

(2) Several reports of one journey: G. Ogg, "The Central Section of the Gospel According to St. Luke," *NTS* 18 (1971-72) 39-53; G. Mackinlay, "St. Luke's Threefold Narrative of Christ's Last Journey to Jerusalem," *The Interpreter* 7 (1910-11) 261-278.

(3) A single journey through Perea: F. L. Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1887) 6.

(4) A fictitious journey through Samaria in which the evangelist inserted "all kinds of situationless units": R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (2d ed.; New York: Harper, 1968) 363-364.

(5) A Christian Deuteronomy: C. F. Evans, "The Central Section of St. Luke's Gospel," *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot* (ed. D. E. Nineham; Oxford: Blackwell, 1955) 37-53.

(6) A chiastic structure is the organizing principle of the central section: M. D. Goulder, "The Chiastic Structure of the Lucan Journey," *SE* II (ed. F. L. Cross; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1964) 194-202; C. H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes, and the Genre of Luke-Acts* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars, 1974) chap. 4; K. E. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant: A Literary Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) chap. 4.

(7) A Christological purpose: H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (2d ed.; New York: Harper, 1961).

(8) A Christological and didactic purpose: W. Grundmann, "Fragen der Komposition des lukanischen 'Reiseberichts'," *ZNW* 50-51 (1959-60) 252-270; P. von der Osten-Sacken, "Zur Christologie des lukanischen Reiseberichts," *EvT* 33 (1973) 476-496.

(9) Journey as authenticated witness: W. C. Robinson, Jr., "The Theological Context for Interpreting Luke's Travel Narrative (9:51 ff.)," *JBL* 79 (1960) 20-31.

(10) Journey as instruction for disciples: D. Gill, "Observations on the Lukan Travel Narrative and Some Related Passages," *HTR* 63 (1970) 199-221; J. Schneider, "Zur Analyse des lukanischen Reiseberichts," *Synoptische Studien* (eds. J. Schmid and A. Vögtle; München: Karl Zink Verlag, n.d.) 207-229; B. Reicke, "Instruction and Discussion in the Travel Narrative," *SE* I (ed. K. Aland et al.; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1959) 206-216.

For a critique of these diverse positions see my unpublished dissertation, "Instruction and Discussion in the Central Section of Luke: A Redaction Critical Study of Luke 9:51-19:44" (Pasadena: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1978).

I will draw on Boris Uspensky's classification of point of view, which looks at viewpoint from four different aspects: ideological, phraseological, spatial and temporal, and psychological.[2] For this study I will use three of Uspensky's categories: ideological, psychological and phraseological.

The ideological point of view is the least accessible of the various aspects of point of view to formalization, "for its analysis relies, to a degree, on intuitive understanding."[3] As "the system of ideas that shape the work,"[4] the ideological viewpoint comes to expression through the "deep compositional structure as opposed to the surface compositional structures."[5] The surface structures—what Uspensky refers to as the psychological and phraseological points of view—may, however, contribute to the conceptualization of the narrator's or a character's ideological point of view. Within the surface structures the voice of the characters, the narrative commentary, and the psychological observations concerning a character's feelings and motivations are especially important in aiding us in conceptualizing the author's or a particular character's ideological point of view.

Though disparate points of view may be expressed on the lips of various characters only one voice emerges as authoritative, giving expression to the underlying ideological point of view of the narrative as a whole.[6] That voice is Jesus' own. His voice or speech shifts and evaluates all other voices in the narrative. Whenever a voice emerges that is nonconcurrent with Jesus' own it is reevaluated from his perspective. Therefore it is not uncommon to see Jesus rebuking or correcting a character's speech. For example, he corrects and condemns the Pharisees and scribes for their misplaced emphasis on external acts of piety (11:39-44) and for their exaltation-oriented worldview (16:14-15).

Also important in conceptualizing an ideological point of view are the narrative comments. Frequently they carry a "heavy load of evaluation,"[7] shaping our feelings and attitudes toward a character. A character's ideological point of view appears acceptable or unacceptable to the reader depending largely on the evaluation given that character's point of view by the narrator. Luke on occasion divides the characters into two distinct groups and then uses a highly evaluative term such as "adversaries" (*antikeimenoi*) to influence our thinking. For example, following a controversy with a ruler of a synagogue over whether it is appropriate to heal on the Sabbath (13:10-16) the narrator sums up his observations in this manner: "As [Jesus] said this, all his adversaries were put to shame; and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him" (13:17).

The psychological observations, a subgroup within the narrative commentary, draw attention to the feelings and motivations of the characters. In general these

[2]B. Uspensky, *A Poetics of Composition: The Structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form* (Berkeley: University of California, 1973).

[3]Ibid., p. 8.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid.

[6]This cannot be demonstrated here, but cf. N. R. Petersen, " 'Point of View' in Mark's Narrative," *Semeia* 12 (1978) 97-121, who shows that this is the case for Mark's narrative.

[7]W. C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University Press, 1961) 177.

comments are highly evaluative and serve to heighten for the reader the ideological differences between the point of view of Jesus and the view voiced by other characters. For instance, the narrator informs us that Jesus knew the thoughts of those who were putting him to the test (11:17), that a Pharisee was "astonished" to see that Jesus did not wash before dinner (11:38), that the ruler of the synagogue was "indignant because Jesus healed on the Sabbath" (13:14), that the adversaries were "put to shame" (13:17), that the Pharisees were "watching" Jesus when he went to the house of a ruler (14:1), that the Pharisees and scribes "murmured" because Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners (15:1), and that the Pharisees "were lovers of money" (16:14). The psychological observations concerning the motivations and feelings of the religious authorities—their indignation, murmuring and astonishment—serve to heighten and sharpen the differences between the ideological point of view of the religious authorities and that of Jesus.

In summary the voice of Jesus dominates the narrative, shifting and evaluating all other speech, while the narrative commentary and psychological observations concerning a character's feelings and motivations sharpen for the reader the differences between the points of view expressed in the narrative.

Before we proceed to analyze our test case—Luke 14:1-33—several questions concerning the compositional structure of the central section need to be asked.

First, Jesus' speech dominates and evaluates all other characters' speech not only in the central section but in the entire gospel. Yet his evaluations concerning the point of view of the scribes and Pharisees become more pronounced and harsh in the central section. Why? We see nothing, for example, like the woes on the Pharisees and lawyers (11:42-53; the parallel account in Matthew occurs in the Jerusalem section of his gospel) in the Galilean section of Luke's gospel. Why do harsh indictments appear in the central section? And why does the ideological point of view of the Pharisees come to expression in the central section so pointedly? Nowhere else do we see their point of view concretized as clearly as in 16:15: "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts; for what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God," says Jesus.

Second, why does the narrator draw attention to sharp divisions within the people? Luke 13:17 is a key verse (cf. also 7:28-30). "All" (*pas*) the adversaries are set in opposition to "all the people" (*pas ho ochlos*). The inclusive usage of *pas* is unmistakable. No third category is offered. Either one falls into the category of adversary or into the ambiguous category of the *ochlos* who rejoice at Jesus' works.

Finally, why are conflicting ideological points of view of the various characters placed in close proximity with each other? Is one point of view being played off against another? Is one point of view presented to illustrate the obverse of another? Is the rhythmic oscillation between the audiences—the disciples or crowd on the one hand and the Pharisees and scribes on the other—intentional?[8] Is the

[8]Disciples (9:51-56); crowd (?) (9:57-62); disciples (10:1-24); lawyer=opponents (10:25-37); disciples (10:38-11:13); crowd (11:14-36); Pharisees (11:37-53); disciples (12:1-12); crowd (12:13-21); disciples (12:22-53); crowd (12:54-13:30); Pharisees (13:31-14:24); crowd (14:25-35); Pharisees (15:1-32); disciples (16:1-31); disciples (17:1-10); ten lepers (17:11-19); Pharisees (17:20-21); disciples (17:22-18:8); Pharisees (18:9-14); disciples (18:15-34); Bartimaeus/crowd (18:35-43); Zacchaeus (19:1-10); disciples or crowd (19:11-40).

reader being presented with two distinct and conflicting ideological points of view intentionally?

These are some of the questions we need to keep in mind as we look at 14:1-33. It is the thesis of this essay that the purpose of a part of the central section is to show forth two ideological points of view in conflict with each other.

At the outset the narrative clearly designates the audience (the Pharisees), and then as the subject matter changes, a different audience comes into view (the crowd). Therefore the first half of the chapter is directed to the Pharisees (14:1-24), the second half to the crowd (14:25-34). The specific designation of audiences is conspicuous in comparison with the colorless geographical, chronological and topographical statements elsewhere in the central section. J. A. Baird observes: "At times the carefulness with which the audience is identified contrasts sharply with vagueness in other contextual elements. Luke in his travel narrative is extremely obscure regarding his topography, but surprisingly careful in observing changes in audience."[9]

After the occasion and audience is noted ("one Sabbath when he went to dine at the house of a ruler who belonged to the Pharisees"), the narrator describes the motivations and intentions of the Pharisees ("they were watching him"; cf. also 6:7). This comment takes on meaning when we recall an earlier conflict between Jesus and the authorities. After Jesus denounces the authorities for their misplaced emphasis on external acts of piety, the Pharisees and scribes decide to lie "in wait for [Jesus], to catch at something he might say" (11:53). This piece of information is also provided by the narrator's voice. Thus the Pharisees' intention in the present narrative is to continue to lie in wait to catch at something Jesus might say.

Twice Jesus asks the authorities a question, and twice the narrator draws attention to their silence (14:4, 6).

Three parables are then given in rapid succession, each focusing on the theme of a banquet or a meal—well-known images for the messianic banquet.

In the first parable the narrator informs us why Jesus told the parable. "Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he marked how they chose the places of honor." This may be an oblique reference to the Pharisees, who have a well-known reputation (in the context of this gospel) for choosing the best seats (cf. 11:39). In the parable those who choose the places of honor run the risk of being displaced by someone more eminent who comes to the marriage feast. Therefore they are to select the lowest seats. Verse 11, however, gives the real reason why the selection of the places of honor is especially blameworthy. It represents an exaltation-oriented point of view that is diametrically opposed to the humiliation-oriented viewpoint that Jesus commends. Not only are two conflicting points of view juxtaposed in the parable, but an abrupt and unexpected reversal of positions occurs to those who hold these points of view. "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (14:11).

The second parable is addressed to the ruler of the Pharisees who invited Jesus to dine at his house (14:12). The unexpected reversal theme of the previous parable continues in this parable. Advice is given to the host concerning who should be invited to a meal: Those who are to receive invitations to a meal—"the poor,

[9]J. A. Baird, *Audience Criticism and the Historical Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, (1969) 51.

the maimed, the lame and the blind"—are characterized by their inability to repay the host, whereas those who can repay the host—"your friends or your brothers or your kinsmen or rich neighbors"—are not to be invited. This "unreasonable advice" further characterizes Jesus' own ideological point of view: Not only is a humiliation-oriented point of view commendable but also a view that seeks no repayment from others for acts performed.

The last parable is the clearest reference to the messianic banquet. It opens with an exclamation from one of the invited guests of the Pharisee ("Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God," 14:15). Jesus then proceeds to tell a story about a great banquet to which many were invited. Each of the ones initially invited, however, in turn offer excuses for not attending. One bought a field and therefore could not come, another bought five yoke of oxen, a third was recently married. Interestingly the excuses given deal either with possessions (a field or oxen) or family.[10] Outraged at the response of those who were initially invited, the householder then commands his servants to go out and compel the outcasts of society—the poor, maimed, blind and lame—to come to the banquet. A solemn concluding statement punctuates the unforeseen reversal: "For I tell you, none of those who were invited shall taste my banquet" (14:24).

The contrast of the parable is between those who are initially invited and those who are later invited, between those who are possession-oriented and those who are possessionless-oriented, between those who hesitate when an invitation is offered and those who decisively respond to an invitation. The unexpected reversal of positions is complete in this parable. Unlike the first parable in which those in the lowest seats merely displaced but did not exclude from the banquet those in the highest seats, in this parable the reversal results in total exclusion of those initially invited.

We may now make several observations concerning how point of view has shaped the first half of the chapter before we proceed to analyze the second half.

1. On the psychological plane the narrator continues to characterize the Pharisees as adversaries of Jesus. In earlier narratives the Pharisees and scribes are characterized by such highly evaluative comments as "provoking" Jesus to speak of many things, or "lying in wait to catch at something he might say" (11:53). On one occasion the Pharisees are labeled as "adversaries" of Jesus who are "put to shame" (13:17). In the present narrative the narrator informs us that they are "watching" Jesus, presumably to catch him in an unlawful act or saying something unlawful. Therefore the Pharisees and scribes are singled out by the narrator as best characterizing the point of view opposed to Jesus' own.

This observation is reinforced by the twofold reference to the Pharisees' silence in the narrative. Never are the religious authorities able to defend successfully their point of view. It is always attacked and reevaluated by Jesus, and the only response on the part of the Pharisees that is noted by the narrator is either their silence or their shame. The result of course is that Jesus' point of view appears to be unassailable in the narrative, whereas the Pharisees' point of view is defenseless.

2. This one-sided presentation is also reinforced on the phraseological level. With three very carefully chosen parables the conceptualization of the adversar-

[10]Cf. L. T. Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars, 1977) 146-147.

ies' point of view is concretized. Their point of view is best described in aggressive terms: They seek the places of honor at a feast. On the other hand, the opposite point of view is best described in abject terms—the view illustrated by those who select the lowest places, not the places of honor. One view is exaltation-oriented, the other humiliation-oriented; the one seeks to gain recognition before others, the other does not; the one is abominable in the sight of God (16:15), the other is praiseworthy (18:9-14).

Furthermore a clear division among the characters occurs within the parables. Those who choose the highest seats are contrasted with those who select the lowest; those who are to be invited to a meal—namely, those who can not repay—are set off from those who can repay; those who are initially invited to the great banquet form a distinct and separate group from those who are invited later.

The divisions among the characters in the parables reflect and parallel the divisions within the people that Jesus brings (e.g. in 13:17). Divisions, however, are not unexpected, for Jesus defines his mission as a division-causing mission. To the disciples he says, "Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division" (12:51; Matthew in the parallel saying has "sword"). At the opening of the gospel in the Magnificat both divisions and reversals are anticipated (cf. 1:50-53). In the present narrative we gain a clearer perspective of Jesus' division-causing mission. Divisions among the characters within the parables express and illustrate the underlying ideological points of view. It is clear that only two ideological points of view are possible. Those who are humiliation-oriented are contrasted with those who are exaltation-oriented, and those who are possession-oriented are set off from those who are possessionless-oriented. The imagery may change, but only two ideological points of view come to expression. The one is opposed to God's way of thinking and acting, while the other reflects God's way of thinking and acting. One is oriented to humankind's way of thinking and acting (e.g. inviting to a meal those who can repay), the other is not.

Besides divisions among the characters, an abrupt and unexpected reversal of positions comes to expression within the parables. Those who are humiliation-oriented displace quite unexpectedly those who are exaltation-oriented, and those who are later invited to the great banquet displace those who are initially invited. The dramatic reversal of positions illustrates well the narrative's belief that only one point of view is acceptable.

At 14:25 a different audience, the crowd, suddenly comes into view. The crowd is set off from the Pharisees and disciples because they do not have a consistently defined point of view. They may side either with the disciples or with the Pharisees. For instance Jesus calls the crowd an "evil generation," for it seeks a sign to test him (11:29). Apparently in this instance the crowd is Pharisee-oriented. (In fact, in the parallel account of Mark and Matthew the "evil generation" is the Pharisees.) At other times the crowd is disciple-oriented.[11]

In the present narrative the crowd is apparently disciple-oriented. They are potential disciples. The call to discipleship is framed in terms of renunciation: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my dis-

[11]Cf. P. S. Minear, "Jesus' Audiences, According to Luke," *NovT* 16 (1974) 81-109.

ciple" (14:26). The renunciation imagery continues to dominate the call to discipleship with the concept of the cross: "Whoever does not bear his own cross . . . cannot be my disciple" (14:27). Finally, the concluding statement of the narrative punctuates in the boldest terms the renunciation-oriented way of thinking: "So, therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple" (14:33).

The renunciation imagery contrasts sharply with the self-assertiveness imagery of the first half of the narrative. The Pharisees' point of view, as we recall, is best described in terms of what they seek to possess. They desire the best places at a banquet or in the synagogue, and they seek recognition among others and to exalt themselves before others (16:15). Even in the parable of the great banquet self-assertiveness terms best describe the view of those who refuse to come to the banquet. They are overly concerned with possessions (a new field or five yoke of oxen), or they are recently married. In other words, those who offer excuses to the banquet do so because they refuse to adopt a renunciation-oriented way of thinking—a way of thinking required of potential disciples.

Therefore contrasting concepts balance each other in the entire chapter and bring to expression on the phraseological level the underlying ideological points of view. A renunciation-oriented perspective is humiliation-oriented and possessionless-oriented, whereas a self-assertive-oriented perspective is exaltation-oriented and possession-oriented.

The purpose of chap. 14, and perhaps of the entire central section, is to bring into sharp relief two diametrically opposed ways of thinking and viewing the world. According to the author, one is correct and the other is wrong.