

positive fundamental option, and re-open to one the possibility of realizing one's life, step by step, in the ethical effort of continuous conversion.

These reflections have been concentrated on and limited to the fundamental level of the rapport of the sacramental and ethical aspects in the sacrament of penance. Without doubt, these remarks will require future deepening and expansion. One point must remain absolutely clear: the just rapport between the sacramental and ethical aspects in the sacrament of penance depends on the relationship that biblical and dogmatic theology draw between their images of God and humanity. These images must not conflict, for the sacraments reveal human beings to themselves, by revealing the truth about God to us. The sacrament of penance is an expression of this which often enough suffers, but which above all else is privileged and full of hope.

Thomas M. Rosica

## **The Road to Emmaus and the Road to Gaza: Luke 24:13-35 and Acts 8:26-40**

A careful study of the two Lukan parallel narratives<sup>1</sup> of the Disciples of Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35) and Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-40) reveals much about the understanding and relation-

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<sup>1</sup> Other parallels with these two Lukan texts are the Acts narrative of Peter and Cornelius (10:1-33) as well as several Old Testament texts which have very similar motifs and may well have served as a background for Luke's composition of the two narratives: the story of Abraham and the heavenly visitors (Genesis 18:1-15; 21:1-7); Jacob's struggle with the angel (32:24-31); the call of Gideon (Judges 6:11-24); Manoah and the angel (Judges 13:2-24); Raphael and Tobit (Tobit 12:6-22), and finally Isaiah's promise of salvation (Isaiah 35:1-10). Each of these Old and New Testament narratives reveals an anthropological schema: i) each story involves misunderstanding and the breaking of a hopeless situation; ii) people are accompanied on their journey [divine messen-

ship of word and sacrament in the Lukan communities. The inter-textual relationship between the two Lukan stories is well known.<sup>2</sup> This episode of the Emmaus disciples, like its parallel of Philip and the Ethiopian court official, is isolated in the resurrection chapter of Luke's Gospel in the sense that it is unconnected with anything that precedes or follows it. It is not woven into the fabric of the ongoing narrative; if it were removed, there would be nothing to indicate that anything of the kind ever stood there. The gospel resurrection story speaks of the bread that is broken and shared among the little group at table in Emmaus, while the Acts story of Philip and the Ethiopian court official speaks of baptism. The Eucharistic overtones of the Emmaus story and the clearly baptismal action of the Acts story reveal two distinctive "sacred acts" or "sacramental" initiation rites in the life of the nascent Christian community.

#### THE EMMAUS STORY

Let us first consider Luke's gospel masterpiece of the Disciples of Emmaus. Carlo Maria Martini has called the narrative "a deeply significant parable because underlying each word is the conversion experience and reception of the kerygma by the primitive Christian community. In this pericope, the evangelist uses words that

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gers]; iii) people are led into concrete experiences of a fuller life or a return to community.

<sup>2</sup> Among those exegetes who have pointed out the parallel design of both Lukan narrative texts are: Étienne Charpentier, "L'Officier Éthiopien (Ac 8, 26-40) et les disciples d'Emmaüs (Lc 24, 13-35)," *La Pâque du Christ: Mystère du Salut. Mélanges F.-X. Durwell, Lectio Divina* 112 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf 1982) 197-201. Also J. Dupont, "Les Pèlerins d'Emmaüs," published in *Miscellanea biblica B. Ubach [Scripta et Documenta 1]*, ed. R. M. Diaz, (Montserrat: Benedictine Abbey 1953) 349-74; J. M. Gibbs, "Luke 24:13-33 and Acts 8:26-39: The Emmaus Incident and the Eunuch's Baptism as Parallel Stories" *Bangalore Theological Forum*, vol. III, no. 1 (1975) 17-30; Joseph Grassi, "Emmaus Revisited (Luke 24:13-35 & Acts 8:26-40), CBQ 26 (1964) 463-67; Jean-Marie Guillaume, *Luc Interprète des Anciennes Traditions sur la Résurrection de Jésus. [Études Bibliques 71]* (Paris: J. Gabalda 1979); C.H. Lindijer, "Two Creative Encounters in the Work of Luke: Luke xxiv 13-35 and Acts viii 26-40" in *Miscellanea Neotestamentica*, vol. XLVIII (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978) 77-85; Jerome Neyrey, *The Resurrection Stories* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier 1988) 38-49; J. Wanke, *Die Emmauserzählung. Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Lk 24, 13-35. Erfurter theologische Studien 31* (Leipzig: St. Bruno Verlag 1973) 122.

are not stones but diamonds which need to be polished if they are to shine brightly enough to illuminate our path."<sup>3</sup> The Emmaus account serves as a transition story between the events at the empty tomb and Jesus' appearance to the assembled apostles and disciples and his departure from them (24:36-53). In both Lukan parallel stories, a pattern emerges which reveals some of the major themes of Lukan Christology and ecclesiology and thus identifies both the Emmaus and Acts narratives as real compendia of the Lukan corpus. Joseph Fitzmyer elaborates on this point in his commentary on the third gospel.<sup>4</sup> He maintains that the Emmaus pericope (Luke 24:13-35) is filled with four major theological motifs unique to Luke: 1) *Geographical*, evidenced in the disciples' route to Emmaus, "making their way" . . . "It is in the geographical setting that Christ instructs them about the sense of the Scriptures. Thus at the end of the Lukan Gospel the appearance-story *par excellence* takes place, not in the vicinity of the city of destiny, toward which Jesus' entire movement in the Gospel has been directed, but his final and supreme instruction about the relation of his destiny to that which Moses and the prophets of old had announced is given 'on the road'."<sup>5</sup> 2) *Revelatory*, "for the risen Christ is only gradually made manifest in his new status to those journeying disciples." At first "their eyes were held from recognizing him" (v. 16); this is not an accurate recollection, but a literary device to advance the story. Finally, they come to recognize him, not by seeing (looking at him), but with the eyes of faith, in the breaking of the bread.<sup>6</sup> 3) *Christological as fulfilling OT prophecy*: "Though the disciples regarded Jesus as 'a prophet mighty in deed and word' (v. 19), one who, they thought, was to deliver Israel, the risen Christ corrects their impression of him, insisting on 'all that the prophets have said!' (v. 25). He is now manifested to them not only as a prophet but as the suffering Messiah, of whom Moses and all the prophets had written." Describing Luke's use of the Old Testament in the Emmaus pericope, Fitzmyer writes: "Luke has his own way of reading the Old Testa-

<sup>3</sup> Carlo Maria Martini, *L'Evangelizzatore in San Luca* (Milano: Editrice Ancora 1986) 33-34.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX and X-XXIV, Anchor Bible 28A* (Garden City: Doubleday 1985) 1557-60.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1557-58.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 1558.

ment and here puts it on the lips of Christ himself; a (Christian) interpretation of the Old Testament thus surfaces in this episode and will be continued in Acts." Fitzmyer speaks of the sacramental moment under his fourth major theme of the Emmaus story: 4) *Eucharistic*, a Lukan motif that begins here, but which will be picked up in Luke's second volume. "The lesson in the story is that henceforth the risen Christ will be present to his assembled disciples, not visibly (after the ascension), but in the breaking of the bread."<sup>7</sup> Fitzmyer's four major themes also apply very well to the Acts story (8:26-40). Luke's narrative of Philip and the Ethiopian clearly involves a geographical aspect, the Ethiopian's gradual coming to faith through his reading and understanding of the Scriptures, the Christological theme of Christ fulfilling Isaiah's servant prophecy, and finally a "sacramental" moment shown in the Ethiopian's request for, and Philip's immediate action of baptism. Though these major themes are found throughout the Lukan corpus, it is in these two stories of Luke 24 and Acts 8 that they are so beautifully and vividly featured.

The Lukan gospel story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (24:13-35) is one of the focal points in the construction of the third gospel. It is clearly a story which reveals the tension between the events at the empty tomb and the disciples in reaction to them. These facts are clear from reading the story: Cleopas and his companion are going away from the locality where the decisive events have happened toward a little village of no significance. The two disciples did not believe the message of the resurrection, due to the scandal of the cross. Puzzled and discouraged, they are unable to see any liberation in the death, the empty tomb, or the message about the appearances of Jesus to the others. In their eyes, either the mission of Jesus had entirely failed, or else they themselves had been badly deceived in their expectations about Jesus.

This beautiful narrative is a very human story, full of pathos; it is also stylized in pattern, suggesting a Eucharistic celebration (vv. 30-32). The disciples come with their questions and doubts (vv. 13-24); the Scriptures are recited (v. 27); words of clarification and instruction are exchanged on the road (vv. 25-27); and finally, the moment of recognition comes in the context of a meal (v. 31).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 1559.

The narrative concludes with the disciples' return to the community in Jerusalem, only to find that the good news of the resurrection has already been made known to those who patiently waited for Jesus in the holy city. Once the two disciples do recognize him at table, Jesus vanishes from their sight. He disappears because his whole purpose is to liberate them by leading them back to faith, a faith that begins by penetrating the deeper meaning of the Scriptures, of human relationships, and of the events that had shaped their lives and their times. The Emmaus story, in its strategic position in Luke's Easter chapter, is clearly attempting to explain why it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer. That reason is to be found in the Scriptures, (vv. 25-27) understood as the revelation of God's purpose in Jesus. The recounting of the story, then, is a preparation for the mission of the apostles and disciples in Luke's second volume: as the witnesses of Jesus continue their journeys until the good news reaches the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), they, too, shall suffer for their belief in Jesus and the works they do in his name, but God shall ultimately triumph. Through the Emmaus story, Luke has transformed a traditional recognition story into a blueprint for the Christian mission.

The Emmaus narrative's main intention is to present the place and conditions for the recognition of the risen Lord. We may assume that this story was told in response to Jesus' continuing historical absence and its perception as a loss to Jesus' followers. The story indicates without a doubt that the whole conversation on the road shares equal importance with the meal in Emmaus and the recognition of the Lord. Thus the main theme of the story is truly recognition of the Lord, not just a recognition of his bodily presence, but of his powerful presence in the Scriptures and in the action of the breaking of the bread.

#### PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN COURT OFFICIAL

There is an unresolved tension that exists in the Acts of the Apostles as to the identity of the first Gentile who was baptized. Luke has preserved two answers to this question. The first deals with the conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10), which is the longest individual narrative in the Acts of the Apostles (66 verses). Its theological significance in Luke's two-volume work is crucial. On the one hand, the author is convinced that the gospel is for everyone. But on the other hand, Luke attempts to convince the readers that

this universality was *not* characteristic of the official Church but of the sub-strata of the Christian community. In the Cornelius episode in Acts 10, Peter came to the realization that God's gifts were given to *all* those who listened to the Word of God. The official *Jerusalem* answer to the question of who was the first baptized Gentile was "Cornelius, when Peter first preached to him in Caesarea" (and this is Peter's own claim at the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15:7-9). According to this view, reflected in Acts 10:1-11:18, it was the apostles who directed the expansion of Christianity; it was Peter, the leader of the apostolic circle, who first preached the gospel to the Gentiles in the house of the Roman centurion Cornelius in Caesarea, and although he did so without first consulting his colleagues, they ultimately voiced their unanimous approval of his action.

But there was also another answer to this question — the answer of the Hellenists who said that the first baptized Gentile was "An Ethiopian court official, when Philip met him on the road to Gaza." But Philip was a free-lance evangelist, and no action of his could commit the church of Jerusalem or its leadership, as Peter's action did. This rather exotic story of a wandering Ethiopian high court official has long been the object of both fascination and curiosity. Why does Luke introduce this episode at all? Perhaps because his Hellenistic source contained it and he thought it too good to be omitted. Perhaps because it illustrated the widening circumference of the Christian circle. But perhaps also because it provided a commentary on the words of the risen Jesus to his disciples at the beginning of Acts 1:8, when he commissioned them to be his witnesses "to the end of the earth." We need to ask ourselves, is the mission to the "end of the earth" fulfilled solely with Paul's arrival in Rome, as indicated at the end of the Acts of the Apostles (28:16)? Or is there another way for this commission to be realized? The disciples could go to "the end of the earth" (and in the end some of them reportedly did). Or the "end of the earth" could come to them. Or has this commission been fulfilled by the Ethiopian's return home to his native land? For the Ethiopians were believed to live at the edge of the earth: since Homer's time<sup>8</sup> the Greeks had thought of them as the "last of humankind." More than one Hebrew prophet had fore-

<sup>8</sup> *Odyssey* 1:23.

told how in days to come remote nations would journey to Jerusalem as worshipers bearing gifts (Isa 60:3-14; Zech 14:16-19); even "from beyond the rivers of Ethiopia," said Yahweh, "my suppliants . . . shall bring my offering." (Zeph 3:10). Eusebius, referring to this narrative in Acts, regards the Ethiopian as the first Gentile convert to Christianity and sees in him the fulfillment of Psalm 68:31 (Septuagint 67). "Let Ethiopia hasten to stretch out her hand to God."<sup>9</sup> It is extremely plausible that when the Lukan community read about a story of an "Ethiopian" returning home southward to a region located on the edge of "Ocean," they would have considered that the Gospel had reached the "end of the earth" in that instance — a partial fulfillment of the prophetic and programmatic statement in Acts 1:8c. Thus the Ethiopian's return home could represent not only the extension of the Gospel beyond Israel to the Gentile world — it could represent the symbolic (and partial) fulfillment of mission "to the ends of the earth," noted in Acts 1:8c. The Ethiopian's geographical provenance uniquely qualifies him to represent this fulfillment.

In the Acts narrative of the journey on the road to Gaza (8:26-40) Philip, like the risen Lord on the road to Emmaus, enters the scene as a stranger. His questions lead to a dialogue among the travelers, and the dialogue builds up to Philip's Christological exposition of the Scriptures with a focus on the Messiah's passion. Following the dialogue, the "sacred act" of baptism and Philip's disappearance conclude the scene, just as the "sacred act" of the breaking and sharing of bread and the Lord's disappearance conclude the episode in Emmaus. As he read Isaiah 53, God was drawing the Ethiopian court official to enter more deeply into the religion of Israel through his reading of the prophet's song of the suffering servant. The divine messenger also directed the deacon Philip to head south along the same road taken by the Ethiopian. In many ways then, God's plans were converging upon the Ethiopian. Yet something was still lacking. Philip's question, "Do you understand what you are reading? (8:30)" is answered with another question by the Ethiopian, "How can I unless someone explains it to me? (8:31)." The gospel that Philip preached to the Ethiopian court official is not "about Jesus" but rather "he preached to him Jesus," which might mean that in Philip's preaching, Jesus him-

<sup>9</sup> *Hist. Eccl.* 2.1.13.

self is conveyed to the Ethiopian. Through Philip, Jesus is made present and known to the court official. In other words, in the Church Jesus is present, and in the Church's ministry lies the extension of Jesus' ministry in Luke-Acts. It is only as one goes *in the Way* that knowledge about Jesus leads, through the presence of the Lord, to a living understanding of the Scriptures. And it is only as one goes *in the Way* that knowledge of the Scriptures leads, through Jesus' presence, to an understanding of the events. What, then, does this Ethiopian represent? He is a Gentile and a eunuch; hence he stands for all the maimed who could not enter the assembly or draw near to make an offering in the temple (cf. Lev 21:16-23), and as representing both the Gentiles and the maimed, he is now brought into the temple made without hands, the Church. Thus baptism is presented as the means whereby those who were outside are now brought in. Once the Ethiopian departs from the narrative, we are left free to presume that when he arrived back in his homeland at the edge of the world, he spread the good news there. One reader in the early Church who assumed this was Irenaeus:<sup>10</sup> the Ethiopian, he says, "was sent to the regions of Ethiopia to proclaim the message which he had believed." The record of Nubian Christianity cannot, however, be traced back earlier than the fourth century. In his church history, Eusebius<sup>11</sup> says that the Ethiopian whom Philip baptized returned home and became an evangelist. Our text makes no mention of that fact, but only says that he "went on his way rejoicing" (v. 39). It would be easy to understand, however, why Eusebius described the Ethiopian's life in that way. To this eunuch fell the privilege of asking — and it is the first recorded instance of the question being asked — of whom the prophet in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah was speaking. And to Philip was granted the privilege of giving a definite answer to the eunuch's question. How great was the privilege of the eunuch to ask the question — and greater yet the privilege granted to Philip to tell the Ethiopian of the one about whom the prophet was speaking! Luke cannot destroy the harmony of his presentation by having a Gentile converted prior to Cornelius' conversion (ch. 10), but he did want to include the beautiful story about the Ethiopian eunuch. This Ethio-

<sup>10</sup> *Against Heresies*, 3.12.10.

<sup>11</sup> *Hist. Eccl.*, 2.2.13-14.

pian court official finds answers in the correct understanding of Scripture and its Christian transposition appropriation. The proclamation of the Scriptures is not only a cerebral process involving theory and intelligence; it also demands an experiential knowledge of Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified and risen one. The Ethiopian is baptized and goes on his way rejoicing.

The physical presence of the risen Jesus is not at the heart of the story of Philip and the Ethiopian. What matters for this foreign court official is that someone lead and guide him in his understanding of the suffering of God's servant. This leading and guiding culminate in his asking Philip for baptism, that is, a full participation in the community of those who believe in Jesus. After the baptism of the Ethiopian, Philip, caught up by the Spirit, disappears from the Ethiopian eunuch, and this newly baptized foreigner goes on his way rejoicing. Philip, for his part, goes on preaching the Gospel at Azotus.

What does this narrative of Philip and the Ethiopian reveal about the missionary and evangelizing efforts of the churches? Carroll Stuhlmueller<sup>12</sup> points out that Acts 8:26-40 speaks of two pilgrimages of understanding that are to be made: one pilgrimage is made to the temple and to Church, and is not only a physical journey but a spiritual walk through the pages of Scripture. The other pilgrimage is that to be made by the Church toward those who are struggling with the meaning of the Scriptural words and who are being attracted by God to deeper meaning and life. When these two pilgrimages converge, requests are made for entry into the believing community. Doors are opened. Yet these doors swing back and forth. The Ethiopian court official is welcomed into the church community only to be sent forth as a bearer of the Good News. Philip disappears and the foreigner continues on his journey rejoicing.

#### WORD AND SACRAMENT IN LUKE'S COMMUNITIES

The parallelism between the two stories cannot be accidental. Luke provokes our reflection on the relationship between word and sacrament in the Church's life and also on the relationship between Scripture (i.e., the Old Testament) and Christ. Just as the

<sup>12</sup> *Biblical Meditations for the Easter Season* (New York: Paulist Press 1980) 55-58.

story of the Ethiopian eunuch is dealing with the sacrament of baptism, we have good reason to believe that **the disciples with whom Jesus eats at Emmaus are shown by their very act of eating with him to be restored disciples, true believers in the risen Lord, and genuine members of his community of disciples. Shared teaching and shared table fellowship are both ministerial actions of the risen Jesus and symbols of complete membership in Jesus' following.**

A point of contact between the stories is the fact that the disciples of Emmaus are talking together; the Ethiopian has no one to talk with him. The Ethiopian is reading the prophet Isaiah, and in a way, he has a conversation with the prophet. And yet at the heart of the "conversations" of both the disciples and the Ethiopian is the theme of the necessity of the suffering, crucifixion and death of God's servant. The Emmaus disciples are disappointed about what has happened to Jesus, and the Ethiopian is incapable of understanding the prophesy. Another parallel in both stories is that the readers know who the stranger is: the risen Jesus, and his follower and preacher Philip. The travellers do not know this. In both stories Luke, after the "sacred act," abruptly puts an end to the meeting as a result of a miraculous disappearance of the stranger. Jesus became invisible to the travellers to Emmaus (Luke 24:31). The Spirit of the Lord caught up Philip and the Ethiopian saw no more of him (Acts 8:39). In the Gospel story the sudden disappearance is more obvious than in the more "ordinary" story in Acts. At the end of both stories the travellers start on their way again. For the Emmaus disciples it means a turn: they go back to Jerusalem at the same hour (Luke 24:33). The Ethiopian travels on to his country: for him a turn is indicated in his rejoicing (Acts 8:39). The stranger continues his work: Jesus makes his appearance in Jerusalem (Luke 24:36) — and has appeared to Simon (v. 34); Philip brings the Good News from Azotus (Ashdod) to Caesarea (Acts 8:40), as he did to the Ethiopian. That the work of preaching is going on also holds for the travellers to Emmaus (Luke 24:35); preaching by the Ethiopian in his country may be presumed, but the story makes no mention of it.

Describing the differences between the two narratives, Étienne Charpentier<sup>13</sup> has said that "in the Emmaus account, it is the

<sup>13</sup> Étienne Charpentier, "L'Officier Éthiopien (Ac 8, 26-40) et les disciples

Scripture which gives meaning to the life of Jesus; in the account from Acts, it is the life of Jesus which gives meaning to the Scriptures." In both Lukan journey narratives, the follower of Jesus is to have a deep understanding of the Scriptures and a sense of salvation history which are both central to knowledge of Jesus. Are both stories describing specific sacramental moments of Eucharist and baptism in the early Church? Why did Luke write these two paradigmatic stories for his Christian communities and for the Church? The parallel design is meant to stress a point of continuity between the Easter pilgrims' experience and the experience of the early Gentile Church, i.e., the comings and goings of itinerant missionaries.

#### A HERMENEUTICAL CIRCLE OF INTERPRETATION

Both Lukan stories illustrate a specifically Christian hermeneutical circle: the Emmaus narrative reflects a movement *from the Scriptures to the person of Jesus* whereas the Acts narrative illustrates a movement *from Jesus to the Scriptures*. Such a circle of interpretation enables us to interpret our experience, our world, our Scriptures, ourselves, in ways that avoid "distancing" ourselves and thus separating the process of knowing and doing. Robert McAfee Brown proposes a "hermeneutical circle of interpretation"<sup>14</sup> for the Emmaus story. *Step One* refers to the actions that have taken place culminating in the tragic events of Jesus' crucifixion and death. These events cause Cleopas and his companion to lose hope in this would-be Messiah who would redeem Israel and flee from Jerusalem to an unknown place. The jarring actions of Jesus' suffering and death lead to a critical reflection *Step Two*. The disciples' overall understanding of the Messiah is shattered and they are forced to rethink and retell the whole story of Jesus. New categories, new questions, new words, new experiences and a new understanding of the whole Jesus-event are needed in order

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d'Emmaüs (Lc 24, 13-35)" *La Pâque du Christ: Mystère du Salut. Mélanges F.-X. Durwell, Lectio Divina* 112 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf 1982) 197-201.

<sup>14</sup> Robert McAfee Brown, *Unexpected News: Reading the Bible With Third World Eyes* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press 1984) 21-32 on the Emmaus story: "Emmaus . . . And Back Again: A New Form of Knowing (Changing Methods) Luke 24:13-35." The hermeneutical circle of interpretation is found on page 31.

for them to understand the whole story. *Step Three* invites them to turn again to the Scriptures with a whole new set of questions and concerns. Jesus opens for the two disciples the Scriptures and shows especially the necessity of the Messiah's suffering in order to enter into his glory. *Step Three* raises an important question: How does one interpret the Scriptures? Does this interpretation lead *the interpreter* and *others* to faith, sight, understanding? Does the interpretation lead to an experience of the Risen Lord, so much so that the hearers would respond in the same way that Cleopas and his companion did (vv. 28-32)? *Step Four* is a gesture of hospitality and a moment of celebration that results in the bread blessed, broken and shared at table and their full recognition of Jesus in their midst. *Step Five* bespeaks of the reintegration of Cleopas and his companion into the community of believing disciples in Jerusalem. But the journey does not stop there: the Acts of the Apostles attests to the fact that the process begins all over again as the disciples leave Jerusalem to go to "all nations" (Luke 24:47) and become witnesses and ministers of the Word.

Since the story of the Emmaus disciples has a direct parallel in Luke's text of Philip and the Ethiopian, I propose the following circle of interpretation for the story of Philip and the Ethiopian. *Step One* presents us with an Ethiopian court official returning home after worship in Jerusalem. He is trying to understand the meaning of the Isaiah text that he is reading along the journey (Acts 8:27-28). *Step Two* introduces Philip, sent by the angel and the Spirit, to go and meet up with the Ethiopian *en route* (vv. 26-27). *Step Three* is the dialogue between Philip and the Ethiopian which culminates in Philip's explaining the meaning of the Isaiah text and his proclamation of the good news of Jesus to the Ethiopian court official (vv. 32-35). In *Step Four* the two come upon some water and the Ethiopian asks Philip what prevents him from being baptized (vv. 36-38). Philip gives in to the foreigner's request. In the final *Step Five*, Philip disappears and the Ethiopian goes on his way rejoicing. Philip continues on his journey and proclaims the good news of Jesus (vv. 39-40).

In the Acts narrative, the message is clear: one can only seek baptism if one can see the relationship between the stories of Scripture and the life and mission of Jesus. Both Lukan journey stories illustrate a specifically Christian hermeneutical circle: the Emmaus narrative reflects a movement *from the Scriptures to the*

*person of Jesus* whereas the Acts narrative illustrates a movement *from Jesus to the Scriptures*. It can be said that both stories are describing the origins of the sacraments of initiation in the early Church. In both Lukan narratives, the evangelist is establishing a link between Old Testament texts and the one about whom they all speak: Jesus of Nazareth.

There is a major difference between the Acts narrative and that of the Emmaus disciples. The denouement of the Emmaus story is the recognition of Jesus at some point while they were at table in Emmaus. Whether he was recognized by Cleopas and his unnamed companion before the meal, during their time at table, or in the breaking and sharing of bread at the end of the meal is not clear from the Lukan Gospel text. Enlightenment of the Sacred Scriptures is not allowed to be the sole concern of the Emmaus story at all. What matters for the Emmaus disciples is the presence and aliveness of Jesus the Lord in their world of doubt and despair. The physical presence of the Risen Jesus is not at the heart of the eunuch story. In the story from Acts, the Ethiopian is never said to have recognized Jesus. What matters for the Ethiopian eunuch is that someone guide him and lead him in his understanding of the suffering of God's Servant. This leading and guiding culminate in his asking Philip for baptism, that is, a full participation in the community of those who believe in Jesus. This foreign court official appears from nowhere, responds wholeheartedly to the gospel, is immersed into the life of the Church, and joyfully goes on his way. He came full circle into a whole new hermeneutic of understanding. His whole journey most certainly elicited an imaginative response from the early Church, and continues to elicit a similar response from the Church today. Luke has written each story for its context.

#### THE ROADS TO EMMAUS AND GAZA

What are the consequences of this intertextual study for our understanding of Luke-Acts? For the disciples on the road to Emmaus, the Word of God jolted them out of their self-pity and misinterpretation of the Scriptures and drew them deeper into the mystery of the passion and death of Jesus. They needed to understand that the suffering of Jesus of Nazareth had been foretold in the Scriptures and therefore identified him as the Messiah. Only

through the breaking and sharing of bread do they come to recognize Jesus again for who he really is. The Ethiopian finance minister needed to understand what he was reading in order for the message of Jesus to make sense (Acts 8:31 ff.). Philip was interpreter and proclaimer of the good news of Jesus for this court official.

The disciples of Emmaus have knowledge of the events but not of the Scriptures, while the foreigner has knowledge of the Scripture but not of the events. Both the Emmaus disciples and the Ethiopian stop short in their understanding because they do not know Jesus (Luke 24:16; Acts 8:34). In Luke's presentation it would appear that neither knowledge about Jesus nor knowledge about the Scripture will bring one to confess, to know, or to have a living relationship with Jesus by itself. That would appear to come only as one goes in *The Way* (note "the way" passages in each narrative, Luke 24:32, 35; Acts 8:26, 36, 39). This would certainly match Luke's emphasis on Christians as being those of *The Way* (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). Jesus (Luke 20:21) and Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:26) proclaim "the Way of God." To these passages might be added Acts 16:17 (Paul and his companions are said to proclaim a "way of salvation"); the expression "the Way of the Lord" (Acts 18:25); as well as the Gospel references Luke 1:76, 79; 3:4, 5; 7:27; 9:57; and 10:4. An entering upon "the Way" might also be alluded to in Acts 9:17 and 27, which deal with the conversion of Paul.

In the two Lukan narratives of the disciples of Emmaus and Philip and the Ethiopian, the roads from Jerusalem to Emmaus and Jerusalem to Gaza are the symbolic structures of the journeys or *Ways* through the Scriptures to Christ, and the journeys or *Ways* from Christ to the Scriptures. For the Christian, this journey is necessary to recognize Jesus as the unique and definitive eschatological fulfillment of salvific events and of figures and prophecies of the past. Jesus brings about a recognition of himself in the breaking of the bread — an invitation to share life, victorious over death. Thus he inaugurates the time of the Church and the time of the repetition of sacramental signs, through which he continues to give the gift of life, given once and for all. Jesus also brings about a recognition of himself through the prophecies of the Scriptures. The Ethiopian is converted to the good news of Jesus and asks what prevents him from being baptized. Luke has

placed the baptism at a strategic position in his narrative: between the baptism of Samaritans and, in chapter 10, the baptism of a Gentile.

What Luke teaches is based on an experience that he and many others had in the early Church — that of Christ manifesting himself as a mysterious stranger, a traveling apostle. What are we to make of the meetings that take place unexpectedly and are abruptly broken off again — we hear first of all that human beings cannot command this creative happening by themselves, it comes unexpectedly and suddenly and then it is over. It implies that there is no permanent presence, the relation is broken off again, the word and the “Sacred Act” are present for a moment only. The human journey goes on after the creative meeting, but things have changed because of the meeting. The direction is different, there is no longer a flight (Emmaus disciples); the state of mind is different (the Ethiopian is now full of joy). Both the Emmaus disciples and the Ethiopian court official have been forced to rethink and retell the whole story of Jesus in a new light, because of their new insights and understanding of God’s word. They are also able to tell the stories of the Scriptures in a whole new light, because of their new understanding of Jesus, the one about whom the Scriptures spoke.

Our two Lukan texts of the Road to Emmaus and the Road to Gaza are complementary and constitute together a Christian hermeneutical circle or spiral. In the Emmaus pericope, Scripture is proposed as the key to understanding Jesus of Nazareth; in the Acts passage it is Jesus who is the key to understanding the Scriptures. There is a dynamic two-way movement between the texts. This movement is an essential element in the architecture of the Luke-Acts and in Luke’s own message to the Church of his day and of our day. For in the story of two dejected disciples, and through the journey and baptism of one foreigner, we see what solid exegesis and proclamation of the good news can really do!



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