


The Presentation in the Temple (Luke 2:21–24): An Intertextual Reading in a Communicative Approach

Isaac Moreno Sanz

San Leandro Theological Institute, Spain
morenosanz@itsanleandro.es

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-6628-0291>

ABSTRACT: The presentation in the Temple (Luke 2:21–24) is a key text for understanding Jesus' infancy. Through a rich intertextual dialogue, which includes the first two textual quotations from Luke, the importance of the Law of Moses in understanding the Messiah of Israel is shown. Circumcision, the naming, the offering, and the ransom of the firstborn form the first stages in the life of Jesus. The journey proposed starts from the text in its literary context, analysing textual cohesion and communicative coherence, and concluding with a pragmatic focus.

KEYWORDS: Gospel of Luke, Luke-Acts, Luke 2:21–24, intertextuality, Temple, presentation, pragma-linguistics

The presentation in the Temple (Luke 2:21–24) is a key text for understanding the infancy of Jesus. In this episode we find the first textual quotations from the work of Luke. Moreover, the intertextual dialogue is extended by the succession of Jewish rites: the circumcision, the imposition of the name, the presentation and the ransom of the firstborn.

The exegetical analyses of Luke 2:21–24 situate it as an introduction to the whole of the Presentation in the Temple.¹ Precisely for this reason, some authors² have considered it a transition, preamble, or preparation for the episode that takes place in the Temple, where Simeon takes centre stage (Luke 2:25–39). However, Luke, not given to improvisation and a skilful narrator,³ offers the first verses of the episode (Luke 2:21–24) as the key to the reading of the whole (Luke 2:21–39). Through the dialogue with the Scriptures of Israel, he activates the reader's attention with the alternation of the actions (Luke 2:21–22) and of the motivation for which they are carried out (Luke 2:23–24). In this way, the intertextual dialogue flows continuously, not only with the high point of the explicit quotations,

1 Cf. A. García Serrano, *The Presentation in the Temple: The Narrative Function of Lk 2:22–39 in Luke-Acts* (AnBib 197; Roma: Gregorian & Biblical Press 2012) 148–151.

2 Cf. J.M. García Pérez – M. Herranz Marco, *La infancia de Jesús según Lucas* (SSNT 6; Madrid: Encuentro – Fundación San Justino 2000).

3 Cf. I. Moreno Sanz, "Lucas, artesano de las palabras. Una aproximación a la estrategia comunicativa lucana a través de los diálogos y los discursos," *EstBib* 83/1 (2025) 51–68, <https://doi.org/10.60098/eb.25083.10003>.

but also with other references, which, as in the whole of the infancy narrative (Luke 1–2), require the reader's collaboration.

Thanks to the use of Scripture and the fulfilment of the precepts of the Law, the Lucan account provides, from the first moments of Jesus' life, the framework for understanding the main protagonist of the work. Therefore, it is not enough to identify quotations, allusions, echoes, and other intertextual references, but it is necessary to understand the communicative richness found in the Word of God. Through the confluence of skill and knowledge, Luke expresses the joy⁴ of the newness of the Gospel, using the language of the past and fostering a continuous dialogue.

The present research explores the episode of the presentation in the Temple (Luke 2:21–24), emphasising the communicative strategies that construct a particular model reader in three main aspects. Firstly, it shows the theological importance of the Law of Moses; secondly, it highlights the readings and rereadings of the Scriptures in their different intertextual connections, which make the Lucan text resonate with authority and promote dialogue between the two Testaments; and, finally, it shows the relationship with the Jewish cult, between omissions and ambiguities, which focuses attention on the theological core. Thus, on the basis of the studies carried out, we propose a reading in a communicative key⁵ that highlights the pragmatic articulation necessary for a Lukan understanding of the Messiah of Israel. The real readers, called to live from the holiness of the Saviour, find in the generosity of the offering and in the presentation of Jesus to the Father a model for their action in the Christian communities.

1. Literary Architecture: Between Text and Context

An understanding of the Lucan story requires an approach that takes into account both its internal architecture and its insertion into the narrative of the Gospel as a whole. The first hermeneutical step is to determine the precise limits of the passage. This delimitation allows us to recognise the literary coherence that articulates Luke 2:21–24 with the contiguous scenes, forming a narrative unity of theological meaning. From this perspective, the first scene is revealed as a key to the reading of the Lucan triptych (Luke 2:21–39), insofar as it anticipates theological and narrative motifs that will be developed later.

1.1. Delimitation, Unity, and Textual Criticism of Luke 2:21–24

The beginning of the first scene of the episode, known as the presentation in the Temple, is situated in Luke 2:21. Narratively, v. 21 acts as a bridge or hinge between the nativity scene and the shepherds' scene (2:1–20) and the three scenes which take place in the geographical

4 On the joy at the birth of Jesus, cf. J. Nagy, "Joy at the Birth of Christ: A Study of Matthew 2:10 and Luke 2:10," *BA* 15/3 (2025) 437–451, <https://doi.org/10.31743/ba.17901>.

5 Cf. M. Grilli – M. Guidi – E.M. Obara, *Comunicazione e pragmatica nell'esegesi biblica* (Lectio 10; Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo 2016) 11–117.

setting of the Temple. The beginning of this episode is placed by some authors in v. 22, who, while recognising the connection between v. 21 and v. 22, for different reasons establish the beginning of the first scene in v. 22.⁶ But syntactic, narrative, geographical, and chronological reasons allow us to fix the beginning of the episode in v. 21:

- (1) Verses 21a and 22a are practically syntactically identical, propitiating a syntactic connection between the two verses and playing a role of beginning terms.⁷
- (2) The parallel structure of v. 21a and v. 22a connects with v. 6b. Birth, circumcision, and presentation in the Temple are framed by the fulfilment (πικυλλημι) of the prescribed time.⁸
- (3) The angels and shepherds (2:15, 20), while Mary, Joseph and the Child are still present in v. 21. In this way, the narrative continues, maintaining the connection with the previous episode through the characters: Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.
- (4) The geographical setting of the circumcision is not indicated in v. 21. It is not specified that it is the Temple or Jerusalem,⁹ nor that it is Bethlehem, the place of the previous scene. In any case, the blurring of the geographical context serves to underline that the importance, both narratively and theologically, is in the fact of the circumcision, obviating the details of the place of the circumcision. In this way, geographical jumps between v. 21 and vv. 22–24 are avoided.
- (5) Finally, v. 21 indicates that eight days have already passed since the birth of Jesus, so that it moves it chronologically away from the birth (2:1–20).¹⁰ The absence of accommodation in Bethlehem and the provisional nature of the place of the birth (2:7) suggest that eight days later the scene is different, although the text, which focuses attention on other elements, does not specifically indicate this.

The end of the first scene is established in v. 24 for narrative, morphological, geographical, and chronological reasons. Narratively, the expression *καὶ ἰδοῦ*, with which v. 25 begins, claims the reader's attention and serves to introduce new elements into the narrative.¹¹ The noun *ἀνθρώπος*, without article or pronoun, is frequently used to indicate progression in the narrative or to introduce a new character (cf. Luke 4:33; 6:6; 10:30; 14:2; 20:9).

In vv. 21–24, the use of the aorist predominates.¹² The first verb of v. 25 (ἦν) in the imperfect tense places the action in the background, describing the previous circumstances

6 Cf. García Serrano, *The Presentation in the Temple*, 148–151.

7 Cf. R. Meynet, *L'Évangile de Luc* (RhSem 8; Pendé: Gabalda 2011) 138.

8 Cf. J.B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1997) 141.

9 There were no regulations as to where circumcision was to be performed. Usually it was the father who performed it (Gen 21:4) although, on some occasions, it could be the mother (Exod 4:25) or another person (1 Mac 1:61), but it was not performed in the Temple, nor by a priest. Cf. García Serrano, *The Presentation in the Temple*, 149, note 5.

10 Cf. García Serrano, *The Presentation in the Temple*, 148–149.

11 Cf. F. Bovon, *El evangelio según san Lucas (Lc 1, 1–9, 50)* (BEB 85; Salamanca: Sígueme 1995) I, 204.

12 The aorist is the tense of 9 of the 13 verbs of Luke 2:21–24. None of these verbs is in the imperfect.

of Simeon,¹³ who becomes the protagonist in the second scene (vv. 25–35). He is also the subject of the verbs that carry the weight of the narrative in vv. 25–28 and initiates in v. 29 the direct speech that concludes in v. 32.¹⁴

Geographically, the scene is explicitly situated from v. 22 in the city of Jerusalem.¹⁵ Indeed, the city is named again in v. 25 as the place of Simeon's residence, establishing a connection between vv. 22–24 and vv. 25ff. However, the difference between the way Jerusalem is named in v. 22 (Ἱεροσόλυμα) and in v. 25 (Ἱερουσαλήμ) does not go unnoticed. Thus, Jerusalem as a geographical setting serves as the junction of the triptych, while the form used distances the first and second scenes.¹⁶

The greatest textual difficulty arises in v. 22 due to the different variants of the pronoun accompanying the noun καθαρισμός.¹⁷ Of the different possibilities, αὐτῶν and αὐτοῦ constitute the *lectio difficilior*. The variant αὐτῶν is attested in both Alexandrian and Byzantine manuscripts. The variant αὐτῶν, proposed by NA,²⁸ the most widespread option since the third century, which is found in most of the main manuscripts and which establishes a greater connection with the context, should be maintained.¹⁸

13 Cf. A. Niccacci, "Dall'aoristo all'imperfetto, o dal primo piano allo sfondo: Un paragone tra sintassi greca e sintassi ebraica," *LA* 42 (1992) 90–97.

14 Through the use of the imperfect, vv. 25–26 are placed in the background, and do not coincide chronologically with the action that in vv. 27–28 takes place in the foreground. The Temple constitutes the geographical frame of the foreground and of the discourse and can only in a broad sense be understood as the frame of the background. Similarly, the temporal frame of the triptych, the forty days of the birth of the Child, is blurred in vv. 25–26, which situate the narrative in the background.

15 The centrality of the city of Jerusalem in the Lucan geography has often been pointed out, cf. J.B. Tyson, *Images of Judaism in Luke-Acts* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press 1992) 24.

16 Some authors have indicated that in Luke, the Hebrew form (Ἱερουσαλήμ), more frequent, places the city in a historical-salvific perspective, while the Greek form (Ἱεροσόλυμα) simply represents a geographical framework, cf. I. de La Potterie, "Les deux noms de Jérusalem dans l'évangile de Luc," *RSR* 69 (1981) 57–70. For a more comprehensive and recent study on this issue: cf. K. Mielcarek, *Ierusalem or Hierosolyma: Exploring the Semitic and Hellenistic Onomastic Notions in Luke's Work* (Lublin Theological Studies 6; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2023). From a diachronic perspective, J. Nolland, points out that the difference between Ἱεροσόλυμα and Ἱερουσαλήμ is due to the fact that vv. 22–24 were not originally joined to vv. 25–40, cf. J. Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20* (WBC 35a; Dallas, TX: Nelson Inc 1989) I, 117.

17 The four main variants are: αὐτῶν (B*, N, A, Θ*); αὐτοῦ (D, lat, sy^s, sa^{ms}; αὐτόν Θ*); and texts where the pronoun is not picked up (435, pc, Bo, Ir^{mt}). F.H. Scrivener proposes to read αὐτῆς, following a single manuscript (76), of minor relevance, dated to the 12th–13th century. Even in this tiny manuscript the pronoun αὐτῆς does not appear, which is rather a solution devised by the editors of the Complutense in the 16th century, cf. XVI (F.H. Scrivener, *A Full and Exact Collation of About Twenty Greek Manuscripts of the Holy Gospels* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2009] 84; S. Muñoz Iglesias, *Los Evangelios de la Infancia. III. Nacimiento e infancia de Juan y Jesús en Lucas 1-2* [Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos 1987] 172–177).

18 The plural form of the third person pronoun 'theirs', would have to refer to Joseph and Mary, because they are the implied subjects of the verb ἀνήγαγον, 'they carried': 'They [i.e., his parents] carried him to Jerusalem.' However, already from the time of Origen many commentators have understood αὐτῶν as a reference to Mary and Jesus, rather than the reference to Mary and Joseph, cf. J.A. Fitzmyer, *Evangelio según san Lucas. II. Traducción y comentarios, capítulos 1–8,21* (Madrid: Cristiandad 1986) 251. In short, for the time being, it can be

1.2. The Triptych (Luke 2:21–39)

Luke 2:21–24 is a scene and not a simple introduction.¹⁹ In fact, the first scene provides essential information and content for the development of the triptych, indicating the key to the reading: the fulfilment of the Law.²⁰

Luke 2:21–39 is divided into three parts or scenes, linked by the geographical framework of the Temple of Jerusalem and differentiated by the presence of various characters.²¹ In the first scene, vv. 21–24, the characters are the parents and the Child, and it is the narrator's voice that drives the action. In the second scene, vv. 25–35, the same characters as in the first scene are retained and Simeon is introduced, the main thread of these verses. As already indicated, the scene unfolds on different levels: background (vv. 25–26), foreground (vv. 27–28, 33–34a), and direct speech (vv. 29–32, 34b–35). In the third and final scene, vv. 36–38, the narrator again conducts the narrative on two planes: background (vv. 36–37) and foreground (v. 38). The prophetess Anna, the protagonist of the scene, addresses the audience to speak of the Child and, unlike Simeon, her direct speech is not recorded.²² Finally, v. 39 is the conclusion of the presentation in the Temple, indicating the return to Nazareth.²³

The triptych begins with the narration of elements that the reader can expect in the context of the infancy narrative.²⁴ In contrast, the second and third scenes narrate events that produce surprise and amazement (v. 33), caused by the Holy Spirit in the case of Simeon (vv. 25–27) and that provoke praise to God in the case of Anna (v. 38). It can be said that the whole episode combines the ordinary and the extraordinary; the expected and the unexpected; faithfulness to the Law and openness to the Spirit.

affirmed that the text refers to the 'purification' of two persons: the purification of the mother and the rescue of the son, cf. García Serrano, *The Presentation in the Temple*, 153–155. Also reading *αὐτῶν*, S. Muñoz Iglesias raises a different possibility of interpretation based on a hypothetical Hebrew text underlying Luke 1–2. The third person pronoun would not accompany *τοῦ καθαρισμού*, but rather *αἱ ἡμέραι [αὐτῶν]*. With this interpretation, 'when the days of purification were fulfilled, the textual problem would find a plausible explanation on the basis of a debatable hypothesis. Cf. Muñoz Iglesias, *Los Evangelios de la infancia*, III, 175–177. Certainly, the language used in the infancy narrative poses many difficulties which have been exhaustively studied. Nevertheless, most contemporary authors rule out the possibility of a missing original Hebrew text, of which Luke 1–2 would be a Greek translation later incorporated into the Gospel as a whole and not a text originally composed in Greek with Semitic influences primarily through the LXX, cf. C.-W. Jung, *The Original Language of the Lukan Infancy Narrative* (JSNTSup 267; London – New York: Clark 2004) 208–216.

¹⁹ By indicating that vv. 21–24 constitute an introduction or an 'introductory section', the focus is on the following two sections, making it impossible to read these verses as a true scene within the whole episode. Cf. Fitzmyer, *Evangelio según san Lucas*, II, 241–242.

²⁰ Cf. García Serrano, *The Presentation in the Temple*, 169–170.

²¹ Cf. M. Crimella (ed.), *Luca: Introduzione, traduzione e commento* (NVBTA 39; Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo 2015) 79.

²² Cf. Bovon, *El evangelio según san Lucas*, I, 198–199.

²³ The return to the place of origin is common at the end of the various scenes of Luke 1–2, cf. 1:23, 38, 56; 2:20, 51.

²⁴ Cf. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 138.

The changes of scene are produced, as already indicated, by the departure and entry of characters other than Mary, Joseph, and the Child, who remain throughout the episode. In the first scene, the narrator recounts the fulfilment of the Law (vv. 21, 22) and, at the same time, lends his voice to the quotations from the Scriptures of Israel (vv. 23, 24), which he introduces appropriately into the scene as a whole. Only in the second scene is the voice of one character, Simeon, heard (vv. 29–32, 34b–35), while in the first and third scenes only the narrator's voice is heard, focusing on different protagonists.

As in the musical realm, the key can be changed during the course of the work if the composer deems it necessary. However, the fulfilment of what the Law prescribes about the Child, the broad synthesis of the first scene, is repeated in the second scene (v. 27) and, functioning as an inclusion, the narrator confirms in the conclusion that it has been carried out as prescribed (v. 39).

The reading key does not mean that it is the only theme of the triptych; rather, it indicates the tone in which the episode should be read so that the three scenes sound harmoniously. In this way, the reader will be able to hear with greater force themes of theological weight which will be taken up again throughout the work of Luke: the 'today' of salvation;²⁵ Jesus as saviour;²⁶ the recipients of salvation;²⁷ the astonishment caused by Jesus.²⁸

By highlighting the first scene (vv. 21–24) as a key to the reading of the triptych as a whole, not only its communicative importance is highlighted, but also its specific study is justified. For this approach, we do not disregard its connection with the whole episode²⁹ (Luke 2:21–39), nor with the remote co-text (Luke 1–2). Indeed, Luke 2:21–24 is understood within the literary co-text, near and remote, which sheds light on the scene, just as vv. 21–24 provide elements necessary for the understanding of the co-text.

2. The Threads of the Fabric: Textual Cohesion and Coherence

The linguistic connection (lexical and grammatical) between the parts of the pericope, and the communicative coherence, make it possible to understand the text as a whole. Both elements determine textual cohesion, which is defined by the following aspects.

25 Cf. M. Grilli, *L'opera di Luca. I. Il Vangelo del viandante* (Biblica; Bologna: EDB 2012) 31–32.

26 Luke is the evangelist who most frequently uses the title *σωτήρ* referring to Jesus (Luke 1:47; 2:11; Acts 5:31; 13:23) and salvation is one of his recurring themes (Luke 1:69, 71, 77; 2:30; 19:9). Luke-Acts is framed by salvation in reference to Jesus, universal Saviour (Luke 2:30; 3:6; Acts 28:28).

27 Cf. D. Marguerat – E. Steffek, "L'avvento della salvezza universale in Luca-Atti," *Una salvezza a misura dell'universo. Scritti in onore di Gérard Rossé* (ed. G. Ibba) (Per-corsi di Sophia 3; Roma: Città Nuova 2015) 139–162; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 139.

28 Cf. García Serrano, *The Presentation in the Temple*, 161.

29 Cf. H. Hendrickx, *The Infancy Narratives* (Studies in the Synoptic Gospels; London: Chapman 1984) 105.

2.1. Dramatic Elements of Cohesion and Coherence

As has been shown, the circumcision and naming (v. 21) and the purification, presentation of Jesus in the Temple and rescue of the firstborn (vv. 22–24)³⁰ have often been read and interpreted autonomously or simply as a Lucan redactional introduction preparing the scenes of Simeon and Anna (vv. 25–38).³¹ Nevertheless, it is not difficult to recognise the literary unity of 2:21–24, especially from the use of dramatic criteria.³²

The scene is divided into two moments or passages, vv. 21 and vv. 22–24, collected by Luke within the same time interval, so that they can be read together.³³ Verset 21 situates the action ‘eight days’ after the birth, thus moving away from the previous scene. Verses 22 and 24 place the action ‘when the days of purification were fulfilled’, that is, forty days after the birth.³⁴ Meanwhile, vv. 22b–23 contain elements referring to the rescue of the firstborn, which took place thirty days after the birth and therefore before the purification.³⁵ These apparent inaccuracies in time serve to unify the elements that take place from eight to forty days after the birth, thus unifying v. 21 and vv. 22–24.

The geographical setting is not defined in v. 21. On the one hand, the passage of time moves it away from the place of birth, the manger (2:7), although it does not indicate that it still remains in Bethlehem.³⁶ It is only implicitly separated from Jerusalem.³⁷ On the other hand, v. 22 and v. 24 would take place in Jerusalem, although the narrative does not record the development of the action, but rather the fulfilment of the command.³⁸ The rescue of

30 The quotation in Luke 2:23b from Exod 13:2, 12, 15 refers to the rescue of the firstborn, while v. 24b quotes Lev 12:8, referring to the purification of the mother, but by its placement, gives the impression that it also includes the Child. Cf. A. Rodríguez Carmona, *Evangelio según San Lucas* (CoPa 28; Madrid: BAC 2014) 44.

31 Cf. R.E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, 2 ed. (ABRL; New York: Doubleday 1993) 432.

32 Cf. T. Stramare, “La circoncisione di Gesù. Significato esegetico e teologico,” *BeO* 26 (1984) 195.

33 Cf. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 141.

34 Cf. Nolland, *Luke*, I, 117.

35 Cf. Y.S. Ariel, “Still Ransoming the First-Born Sons? Pidyon Habben and Its Survival in the Jewish Tradition,” *Human Sacrifice in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (eds. K. Finsterbusch – A. Lange – K.F. Diethard Römheld) (SHR 112; Leiden – Boston, MA: Brill 2007) 313–314. The rescue of the firstborn, which the narrator alludes to but does not describe, takes place in the month of the birth, in memory of the last plague of Egypt, when God did not punish the firstborn Israelites. There is no indication that it is to take place in the Temple, cf. Rodríguez Carmona, *Evangelio según San Lucas*, 44.

36 Cf. García Serrano, *The Presentation in the Temple*, 149, note 5.

37 Circumcision stands out theologically because of its link to God’s covenant with his people. It used to take place in the domestic sphere, although more emphasis is placed on the date (‘eighth day’, cf. Gen 17:10–13; Lev 12:3; Luke 1:59; 2:21; Acts 7:8) than on the place, cf. L.D. Chrupcala, “Fede e opere in Luca: il caso della circoncisione,” *LA* 61 (2011) 97–104; D.T. Olson, “Circumcision: Hebrew Bible/Old Testament,” *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception. V. Charisma – Czaczkes* (eds. D.C. Allison Jr. – C. Helmer) (Berlin – New York – Boston, MA: De Gruyter – Brill 2012) 324.

38 Cf. M. Coleridge, *The Birth of the Lukan Narrative: Narratives as Christology in Luke 1–2* (JSNTSup 88; Sheffield: JSOT 1993) 159.

the firstborn,³⁹ vv. 22b–23, is not linked to the Temple, but rather to the domestic sphere.⁴⁰ With these ambiguities, Luke blurs the territorial margins of vv. 21–24, accentuating the literary framework, which is none other than the Scriptures of Israel.

The narrator's voice serves to unify vv. 21–24 and, at the same time, contributes to the internal coherence of the text under analysis. Indeed, the narrator's voice is the only one that is heard, conducting the scene without direct speeches from the characters involved.⁴¹ The only voices other than the narrator's are found in the quotations from the Scriptures of Israel (vv. 23b, 24b). These voices, indeed this voice, maintains a similar tone to the other allusions and echoes in vv. 21–24. This voice is also that of Moses, the only character besides Jesus mentioned by name in these verses (v. 22) and the protagonist of the quotations in their original co-texts (vv. 23, 24). In this way, the narrator shows coherence in the narrative: one and the same voice in which already known voices resound.

2.2. Morpho-Syntactic Elements of Cohesion and Coherence

In vv. 21–22, the narrator leads the narrative by means of a long, uninterrupted chain of aorists (8x), which maintain the main level of the narrative. The aorist infinitive of v. 24, *δοῦναι*, is the foreground verb, which connects the end of the first scene with the beginning of the second scene (vv. 21–22).

The explicit quotations in vv. 23b and 24b show a certain timelessness through the use of different verb tenses.⁴² For an instant, the narrative stops and the reader is explicitly led to link what is happening with the Scriptures of Israel, whereas in the preceding verses the connection has been made by allusions and echoes.

The threefold mention of 'the Law' in these verses (vv. 22a, 23a, 24a) constitutes an element of internal harmony of the scene and of the triptych.⁴³ The noun *νόμος* appears in three of the four verses which, together with the implicit references to the Law, bind the text together and show it to the reader as a coherent whole.⁴⁴

Finally, the repetition of the verb *καλέω* on three occasions should be noted: twice in v. 21 and once in v. 23. The forms *ἐκλήθη* (v. 21) and *κληθήσεται* (v. 23) are connected by the passive voice, although they differ in tense, aorist and future, respectively. The aorist noun participle,⁴⁵ *κληθέν*, is found between both verb forms of the verb *καλέω* and con-

39 On the validity of the performance of such a rite in the first century A.D., cf. Fitzmyer, *Evangelio según san Lucas*, II, 252.

40 Cf. Ariel, "Still Ransoming the First-Born Sons?" 313–314.

41 Cf. E. Galbiati, "La circoncisione di Gesù (Lk 2,21)," *BeO* 8 (1966) 38.

42 The requirement of the quotation propitiates the passage from the perfect (*γέγραπται*) to the future (*κληθήσεται*), in an action that is fulfilled in the present of the narrative.

43 Cf. Fitzmyer, *Evangelio según san Lucas*, II, 245.

44 Cf. M.W. Koehne, *The Septuagintal Isaianic Use of Nomos in the Lukan Presentation Narrative* (Diss. Marquette University; Milwaukee, WI 2010) 37.

45 Cf. M.C. Parsons – M.M. Culy – J.J. Stigall, *Luke: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament; Waco, TX: Baylor University Press 2010) 78.

nects with the angel's command to Mary (καί καλέσεις τό ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν, Luke 1:31b). The use of the participle contributes, in turn, to give greater dynamism to v. 21 and to the scene as a whole.

2.3. Cohesion and Coherence in the Articulation of the Scene

The dramatic and syntactic elements, which have been pointed out above, show the coherence and cohesion of the scene. Verses 21–24 are divided into two interrelated steps with common elements at the syntactic, lexical, and thematic levels. In the first step (v. 21), Jesus is the passive protagonist who receives the two actions: the circumcision (v. 21a) and the imposition of the name (v. 21b). The second step (vv. 22–24) is further divided into two moments: the purification (vv. 22a, 24) and the presentation and rescue of the firstborn (vv. 22b–23).

The connection between the first step (v. 21a) and the second (v. 22a) is established by the use of the same syntactical scheme. The repetition of two temporal subordinate propositions⁴⁶ with the same beginning καί ὅτε, in a marked Semitic style, are intended to provide a chronological framework for the action which, although at first appears precise, a close look will reveal it to be relatively ambiguous. Another connection between v. 21 and v. 22 is shown in the supposed passivity of Jesus. Indeed, both verses show Jesus as the recipient of actions, in the case of v. 22, especially of the verbs ἀνάγω and παρίστημι which imply movement. The aorist infinitive παραστήσαι, as the context indicates, refers to the Child rather than to the offering,⁴⁷ which is presented before the Lord.

The name of Jesus is mentioned a second time (v. 21b) in the infancy narrative, after the angel's announcement (1:31).⁴⁸ In contrast to other infancy narratives of illustrious characters, the protagonist's own name does not appear in the first lines, but only after several characters have been introduced.⁴⁹ The second step links with the first one through the

⁴⁶ Cf. Meynet, *L'Évangile de Luc*, 128.

⁴⁷ The verb of the main proposition ἀνήγαγον has as its direct object the third person singular accusative masculine pronoun αὐτόν, which refers to Jesus. Verse 23 refers to the firstborn, Jesus. The translation proposed by J.M. García Pérez and M. Herranz Marco would be the following: 'they went up with him [with the Child] to Jerusalem to rescue him from the Lord.' This reading is based on the disputed hypothesis of a Hebrew original of the infancy narrative. According to the authors, the anomalies in the Greek text did not exist in the original Hebrew. Cf. García Pérez – Herranz Marco, *La infancia de Jesús según Lucas*, 88–90. However, with the majority of commentators, the usual translation of the verb παρίστημι as 'to bring near, to bring near, to present' which can also mean 'to offer, to make something available' will be chosen.

⁴⁸ The angel had already used the name (Luke 1:31), but it had not yet been conceived, so that 2:21 is the first time that Jesus is intentionally called by name. Until now, the Child has been called by other titles such as: son of the Most High (1:32), son of God (1:35), Saviour, Christ the Lord (2:11), cf. Stramare, "La circoncisione di Gesù," 197–198. The Christological titles are presented even before the proper name, which functions as both name and title.

⁴⁹ Note the contrast with the beginning of *The Life of Moses* by Philo of Alexandria, where the name of the protagonist appears at the beginning of the narrative: 'I begin from where it is necessary to begin. Moses was of Chaldean stock [...]; cf. Filone di Alessandria, *De vita Mosis. Testo greco a fronte* (trans. M. Baretta) (Rimini: Guaraldi 2017) 22.

pronoun *αὐτόν* (v. 21a and v. 22b), which refers to Jesus (v. 21b) as direct object and to his parents as implied subjects of the verb *ἀνήγαγον* (v. 22b). Jesus becomes the passive subject of three actions: circumcision, naming, and presentation before the Lord.⁵⁰

A second proper name, hitherto unknown in the Gospel, appears in the scene: Μωϋσῆς (v. 22a). The genitive Μωϋσέως accompanies *κατά τόν νόμον*⁵¹ and is replaced by *κυρίου* in the nominal syntagm *ἐν [τῷ] νόμῳ*⁵² (vv. 23a, 24a). Thus, both Μωϋσέως and *κυρίου* can function as a genitive of origin,⁵³ indicating where the governing term comes from, but also as a genitive of belonging, indicating to whom the accompanying term⁵⁴ belongs. The cohesion of the scene is maintained in the repetition of the noun *νόμος*, while coherence continues by means of relation between Μωϋσῆς and *κύριος*.

The theme of the Law runs through both steps, implicitly (v. 21) and explicitly (vv. 22–24). The first step presupposes the knowledge of the Law and records the observance of the precepts. The second step records the citations of the precepts (vv. 23b, 24b) and names the Law three times (vv. 22a, 23a, 24a). Thus, the Law becomes the backbone that unifies the structure of the scene: the Law is fulfilled (v. 21), the Law is remembered (vv. 22a, 23a, 24a), and the Law is quoted (vv. 23b, 24b). Action, remembrance and reading constitute a narrative and reflective *crescendo* which, by interrelating, bring together the different moments of the first scene of the triptych. In this way, the necessary space is created for the reader to get to know and ‘re-know’ the first steps of Jesus’ life in relation to the Scriptures of Israel.⁵⁵

3. The Scriptures in Dialogue: The Intertextuality of Luke 2:21–24

The dialogue between the author and the Scriptures of Israel is determined by the strategic placement of the explicit quotations (vv. 23b and 24b) and by the echoes and allusions to them present in vv. 21–22.

50 With verbs in the passive voice and the omission of the parents in the foreground, the importance of the relationship with God, rather than with Mary and Joseph, is shown, cf. Coleridge, *The Birth of the Lukan Narrative*, 153–154.

51 The construction *κατά τόν νόμον Μωϋσέως* is a typically Lucan expression, cf. J. Jeremias, *Die Sprache des Lukasevangeliums: Redaktion und Tradition im Nicht-Markusstoff des dritten Evangeliums* (KKNT; Göttingen: Sonderband 1980) 90.

52 This noun phrase, with or without the article, has a locative function, cf. Parsons – Culy – Stigall, *Luke*, 80.

53 Cf. Parsons – Culy – Stigall, *Luke*, 80–81.

54 Although in theory the distinction between the genitive of origin and the genitive of ownership is clear, in context it is more complex. This shows the close relationship between the origin and the ownership of the Law, which belongs both to Moses and to the Lord. Cf. F. Poggi, *Curso avanzado de griego del Nuevo Testamento* (IEB 22; Estella: EVD 2012) 48–49.

55 Cf. Coleridge, *The Birth of the Lukan Narrative*, 226.

3.1. The Formal Characteristics of the Quotations

The first explicit quotation is introduced by the formula *καθώς γέγραπται ἐν νόμῳ κυρίου ὅτι* (2:23a). This formal introduction, with three distinct elements,⁵⁶ prepares the reader to identify the quotation. Regardless of the dependence on an earlier source, the variety of introductory formulas is largely due to the narrative skill of the author, who uses different resources according to the demands of the story.⁵⁷

Studies on the dependence of Luke 2:23b on the LXX version of Exod 13:2 or 13:12, or even 13:15, have not reached a satisfactory agreement.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the dependence on the Exodus text is clear and can be defined as a formal quotation, both by the introductory formula and by the content of the quotation itself. The narrative freedom of the author, who up to this point has not quoted any text from the Scriptures of Israel, may explain that in the first quotation, he puts theological meaning before similarity to its source, just as his narrative qualities⁵⁹ stand out over legal precision.⁶⁰

The second quotation from the first scene is found in v. 24b. On this occasion, the introductory formula is: *κατά τό εἰρημένον ἐν τῷ νόμῳ κυρίου*. The noun participle *τό εἰρημένον*, of the verb *λέγω*, employs the same perfect tense⁶¹ of *γέγραπται* in v. 23b. The preposition *κατά* and the syntagm *ἐν τῷ νόμῳ κυρίου* connect with *κατά τόν νόμον Μωϋσέως* (v. 22a), as well as with the introductory formula of the previous quotation (v. 23a). The changes in the introductory formula are due to narrative reasons, favouring a greater fluidity in the reading. The quotation of Lev 12:8 in v. 24b reproduces literally the text of the LXX.

Both of these quotations, as well as the other references to precepts and customs reflected in vv. 21–24, show the author's concern: 'The narrator is more concerned with the focus of the narrative than with an accurate account of Mosaic law.'⁶² In other words,

56 The subordinating conjunction *καθώς* and the verb *γέγραπται*; the nominal syntagm *ἐν νόμῳ κυρίου*; and the particle *ὅτι*.

57 Cf. Jung, *The Original Language*, 68–69, note 27.

58 A. García Serrano opts for the prevalence of Exod 13:2. Verse 23b quotes freely *ἀγιασόν μοι πᾶν πρωτότοκον πρωτογενές διανοίγον πᾶσαν μήτραν* (Exod 13:2). Luke adds *ἄρσεν* taken from Exod 13:12 and changes the imperative *ἀγιασόν μοι το ἅγιον τῷ κυρίῳ κληθήσεται*. Cf. García Serrano, *The Presentation in the Temple*, 163. According to C.-W. Jung, Luke depends on Exod 13:12 which softens some difficult expressions in the LXX text like *πᾶν διανοίγον μήτραν τὰ ἄρσενικά* (Exod 13:12) and stresses the holiness of the Child, omitting some irrelevant part (*πᾶν διανοίγον μήτραν ἐκ τῶν βουκολίων ἢ ἐν τοῖς κτήνεσίν σου ὅσα ἐάν γένηται σοι τὰ ἄρσενικά*) and adding the verb *καλέω*, cf. Jung, *The Original Language*, 84. The identification with Exod 13:15 is less frequent. Finally, some authors hypothesise that the author intended to summarise Exod 13:2, 12, 15, cf. I.H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Exeter: Eerdmans 1978) 117; D.L. Bock, *Luke. I. 1:1–9:50* (BECNT 3a; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 1994) 237.

59 Cf. Jung, *The Original Language*, 102–103.

60 'The presence of the child was not necessary for the purification of the mother, and furthermore the ransom of the firstborn was not tied to the Temple' (Bovon, *El evangelio según san Lucas*, I, 203).

61 The use of the perfect tense can help to highlight the meaning of the biblical quotation, C.R. Campbell, *Verbal Aspect, the Indicative Mood, and Narrative: Soundings in the Greek of the New Testament* (SBG 13; New York: Lang 2007) 208–209.

62 Coleridge, *The Birth of the Lukan Narrative*, 160.

Luke's focus is not on narrating what they do, but rather why they do it and the results of their actions.⁶³

3.2. The Quotations in Their Original Co-Texts

The co-text of the text quoted in Luke 2:23b (Exod 13:2, 12, 15) is a divine oracle (Exod 13:1–16), where God gives instructions to Moses about the firstborn⁶⁴ (vv. 1–2), which he transmits to the people⁶⁵ (vv. 11–16), adding the feast of unleavened bread (vv. 3–10). Moses' speech is set on the day of the departure from Egypt (v. 3) and begins with an invitation to remembrance.⁶⁶ The role Moses plays in Exod 13:1–16 is that of mediator between Israel and YHWH and, by extension, the mediator between men and God, an essential role that remains in biblical memory.⁶⁷

The second quotation, Luke 2:24b, refers to Lev 12:8, which deals with the impurity and purification of the woman at the time of childbirth. At the end of the forty days, the mother is to bring as an offering to the priest a lamb, a turtledove and a young pigeon (v. 6) to be offered for her before the Lord so that she may be purified (v. 7).⁶⁸ The original context of the quotation from Luke 2:24b refers to the mother's lack of resources.⁶⁹ Thus, v. 8 offers the possibility for mothers of limited financial means to present an alternative sacrifice. Neither impurity nor poverty excludes the mother from the relationship with God and the community. Thus, the prescriptions of Lev 12:1–8 about purification after childbirth become a special grace of God to protect the weak, especially those who, because of poverty, are even more vulnerable.⁷⁰

63 Cf. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 140.

64 References to the giving, sanctification or ransoming of the firstborn are frequent in the Torah, cf. Exod 13:2, 12, 15; 28:28; 34:19; Lev 27:26–27; Num 18:15; Deut 15:19–23; G. Brin, *Studies in Biblical Law: From the Hebrew Bible to the Dead Sea Scrolls* (JSNTSup 176; Sheffield: Clark 1994) 174, 210–212.

65 The practical indications about the ransom of the firstborn, i.e. the time in which it was to be performed (in the month after birth) and the manner of doing it (five shekels of silver), are not found in this text, but are specified in Num 18:15–16, cf. C.L. Meyers, *Exodus* (NCBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2005) 102; Brin, *Studies in Biblical Law*, 177–178.

66 Remembrance serves to look to the past – what happened – but also to the future – what will happen – as is shown by the response the father will henceforth give to the son in explaining and transmitting the faith (vv. 8, 14), which is repeated in both parts of Moses' speech and which constitutes the theological core of the speech. Cf. B.S. Childs, *El libro del Éxodo. Comentario crítico y teológico* (Nueva Biblia Española; Estella: EVD 2003) 220–221.

67 Cf. R.S. Hendel, "The Exodus in Biblical Memory," *JBL* 120/4 (2001) 618–619.

68 Cf. S.E. Balentine, *Levitico* (Strumenti 44; Torino: Caludiana 2008) 129–130.

69 Both the Masoretic Text and the LXX indicate both the verb with the third person feminine singular suffix (שָׁפְטָה) and the feminine pronoun (אֲדֹתֶיךָ). Thus it is clearly indicated that both impurity and sacrifice, as well as the inability to acquire the established offering, were the responsibility of the mother. Cf. J.W. Watts, *Ritual and Rhetoric in Leviticus: From Sacrifice to Scripture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007) 134–135.

70 Cf. D. Tidball, *The Message of Leviticus: Free to the Holy* (BST.OTS; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic 2005) 161–163.

3.3. Dialogue between the Texts

The universality of the precept of Exod 13:2, 12, 15 continues with the adjective *πᾶς* (Luke 2:23b), which is found in the LXX translating the Hebrew *כֻּלּוֹ*. Thus, the precept affects all Israelites, without exception, from the day Israel left Egypt. The reference to the firstborn is maintained by the construction *ἄρσεν διανοίγον μήτραν* (Luke 2:23b), which links the new-born male with the mother's womb. The author maintains this twist, but could have simplified it grammatically with the term *πρωτότοκος*, which he has already used in 2:7 referring to Jesus.⁷¹ In this way, by using the more complex construction, he comes closer to the text of Exod 13:12, especially in the LXX version.

Both the birds and the quantity, 'a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons', are identical in Lev 12:8 and Luke 2:24b. On the other hand, the offering is the same as in Num 6:10 in the case of the contamination of the nazir, a vow of consecration to the Lord (Num 6:8). Formally, the offering shows the relationship between consecration to the Lord and purification by means of these two species of birds – turtledove and pigeon – which in the Scriptures of Israel appear intimately linked to the sacrifice.⁷²

The reformulation of Exod 13:2, 12 in Luke 2:23b removes some difficult expressions from the text, combining both verses. However, the main change is to stress the holiness of the Child (*ἄγιον κληθήσεται*) and to specify the relationship with the Lord (*τῷ κυρίῳ*),⁷³ thus the Child enters into a special relationship with the Lord. Finally, the future tense,⁷⁴ the passive voice and the third person of *κληθήσεται* underline the timelessness of the statement which transcends the limits of the narrative.

Luke 2:24b records only the object of the sacrifice with the two possibilities, but omits the rest of Lev 12:8. The information is confined to the centre of Lev 12:8, omitting the beginning of the conditional proposition: 'if it is not enough for him to present a lesser animal.' Likewise, it also omits the rest of the verse: the specification of the purpose of each animal, 'one for the burnt offering and one for the sin offering'; and the concluding formula that indicates the success of the purification, 'and the priest shall perform the rite of atonement for it, and it shall be pure.' With the reference to the animals of the offering in Luke 2:24b, the author leaves it to the reader to complete the information in Lev 12:8 concerning the poverty of the offerers.⁷⁵ In the quoted text, there is only a lexical change in replacing the cardinal adjective *δύο* ('two') by *ζεύγος* ('a pair'), due to a greater fluidity and narrative quality, avoiding the repetition of *δύο* by replacing it with a synonym.

71 Cf. Bovon, *El evangelio según san Lucas*, I, 203.

72 Cf. Fitzmyer, *Evangelio según san Lucas*, II, 254.

73 The Masoretic Text of Exod 13:2 employs the verb *שָׁמַר*, which the LXX translates by the imperative form of *ἀγιάζω*. On the other hand, v. 12 employs the verb *עָבַר*, which the LXX translate by *ἀφαιρέω*.

74 At the grammatical level, *κληθήσεται* (v. 23b) moves away from the imperative of Exod 13:2 *νόσασαγὰ/שָׁמַר* towards the future of Exod 13:12 in the LXX version (*ἀφελείς*), which translates the *w-qatalti* with future value from the Masoretic Text (*תִּבְרַחְבְּרַח*), cf. P. Joüon – T. Muraoka, *Gramática de Hebreo bíblico* (IEB 18; Estella: EVD 2007) § 119. Thus, *κληθήσεται* (v. 23b) functions as a future of order, frequent for quotations from the Scriptures of Israel, cf. Poggi, *Curso avanzado de griego del Nuevo Testamento*, 136.

75 Cf. Nolland, *Luke*, I, 118.

3.4. Other Intertextual Connections

Connections to the Scriptures of Israel in the infancy narrative are a constant resource. The author connects in various ways with the memory, traditions and precepts of the Jewish community. Luke 2:21–24 skilfully traces a warp of connections with the Scriptures of Israel.

The first element of the scene that connects the two Testaments is circumcision (2:21a). In Gen 17:10–11, 13, circumcision is defined as בְּרִית עוֹלָם, ‘everlasting covenant’, and as אֹת בְּרִית, ‘the sign of the covenant’, between God, Abraham, and his descendants.⁷⁶ As a sign, circumcision has the function of showing incorporation into the community of Israel and of reminding the Hebrews of the obligations and benefits of the covenant with YHWH.⁷⁷ For Luke, who narrates the historical unfolding of God’s salvific plan, the circumcision of Jesus marks the beginning of the messianic fulfilment of God’s plan, which had its starting point in YHWH’s covenant with Abraham and the promises made to his descendants.⁷⁸ Circumcision, as it appears in the infancy narrative, not only inserts Jesus into the realm of the Law, but, above all, involves Jesus in the covenant, showing historically how Jesus is the ‘yes’ to God’s promises.⁷⁹

The second connection, also within the first step, the imposition of the name (v. 21b), takes up a recurring theme in Israel’s Scriptures. As in the case of John the Baptist (1:59) it appears linked to circumcision (v. 21a). In the economy of historical revelation, where deeds and words are closely linked, the rite of Jesus’ circumcision is interpreted by Luke in relation to the name of Jesus.⁸⁰ The name Ἰησοῦς, literally ‘YHWH saves’, is initially a word that moves from being a promise in the Scriptures of Israel to becoming a reality in the Gospel: ‘if the name indicates the task to be performed by the person, by the will of God, the Child Jesus will be a saviour.’⁸¹ By imposing the name, the parents of Jesus⁸² are obedient to the words of the angel sent by God, or, in other words, to the words of God. In the next step, within the same scene (vv. 22–24), it is narrated how the parents of Jesus, and therefore Jesus himself, are obedient to the Law of Moses, or, in other words, to the Law of the Lord.⁸³

76 Circumcision and covenant appear intertwined and linked to the promise of offspring, cf. Stramare, “La circoncisione di Gesù,” 196.

77 Cf. Chrupcala, “Fede e opere in Luca,” 91.

78 Jesus’ circumcision has given rise to radically different interpretations, cf. A.S. Jacobs, “Dialogical Differences: (De-)Judaizing Jesus’ Circumcision,” *J ECS* 15/3 (2007) 310–330.

79 Cf. Stramare, “La circoncisione di Gesù,” 200.

80 Cf. Stramare, “La circoncisione di Gesù,” 201–203.

81 Rodríguez Carmona, *Evangelio según San Lucas*, 44.

82 The role of Jesus’ parents in v. 21 is moderately passive. If the narrator had wanted to underline the execution of the angel’s command he would not have used the impersonal ‘was called’ (ἐκλήθη). Understood as a theological passive, it stresses the divine origin of the name, relativising the active role of Joseph in Matthew’s Gospel (Matt 1:21, 25) and of Mary within Luke’s own infancy narrative (Luke 1:31).

83 Cf. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 433.

4. Conclusions: The Pragmatic Approach

The analysis has shown that the reader of the Lucan infancy narrative is called upon to connect Jesus with the Law of Moses, especially when it is mentioned directly, but not only then. In this way, the necessary elements are given for the relationship between the two Testaments according to a dialogical reading. Thus, by way of conclusion, the meaning and scope of the intertextual games, the veiled allusions and the other suggested connections will be shown, giving a new impulse to the semantic understanding of the text, establishing the pragmatic elements and their possible responses.

4.1. He Was Called by Name Jesus; He Will Be Called a Saint

The imposition of the name on Jesus⁸⁴ (Luke 2:21b) connects with the imposition of the name on John by Zacharias (1:59–66) and with the angel's command to Jesus' mother (1:31). Through the use of a future tense, *καλέσεις*, with the value of an imperative,⁸⁵ Gabriel, in a directive act,⁸⁶ indicates to Mary the name of the Child, making his words sound in the text like the voice of God who has sent him in her name (1:26). In this way, the origin of the name of Jesus is not to be found in the parents, nor even in the angel, but in God himself.

The divine origin of both the name of Jesus and the name of John underlines the intervention of God in their respective missions and, at the same time, guarantees the reality of the meaning of these names: that God will have mercy on his people (John) and that he will save them (Jesus).⁸⁷ The theological significance of God's intervention in naming continues in the meaning of the name, that is, it is a continuing promise of salvation to his people. The name is not just a word, but a person, Jesus, and at the same time, it becomes a Christological title, a promise of God to his people. The real readers, whenever they read John's name, should not remember a character from the past, but an ever-present mercy; the mercy of God the Father who through the Son, Jesus, has saved and continues to save his people.

⁸⁴ In the naming of Jesus (2:21) we do not find direct speech but the words of the narrator who, sharply, employs the passive voice of the verb *καλέω*. Although the declarative act is not direct as in John's case, the consequences of it are: the imposition of the name has effects on the Child, it changes his state. By imposing a name on him a double effect is produced, firstly, the Child, who until now had been designated as *πρωτότοκος* (2:7) *βρέφος* (2:12, 16) *παιδίον* (2:17) comes to have a proper name: *Ἰησοῦς*. Secondly, this name, being recognised by the community, constitutes his proper name and, at the same time, a continuous Christological title pronounced in unison by the evangelist and by the community that reads and listens to the Gospel.

⁸⁵ Cf. Parsons – Culy – Stigall, *Luke*, 30.

⁸⁶ On linguistic acts in biblical exegesis, cf. E.M. Obara, "Le azioni linguistiche: l'influsso del testo sul contesto," *Comunicazione e pragmatica nell'esegesi biblica* (eds. M. Grilli – M. Guidi – E.M. Obara) (Lectio 10; Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo 2016) 83–117.

⁸⁷ Cf. Muñoz Iglesias, *Los Evangelios*, III, 18, italics by the author.

The passive voice⁸⁸ ἐκλήθη (Luke 2:21) contrasts with the active role of Joseph in Matt 1:25, where ἐκάλεσεν is part of the set of actions (Matt 1:24–25) that makes him the protagonist of the narrative. The imposition of the name on Jesus⁸⁹ (Luke 2:21), according to the angel's command (Luke 1:31), is located between the angel's announcement to the shepherds (Luke 2:11) of the birth of the saviour (σωτήρ) and Simeon's confirmation of the salvation (τό σωτήριόν σου) of God to his people (2:29–32). With this thematic reiteration, developed by different characters and under different aspects, the author shows, from the first chapters, Jesus as saviour and reminds the community of the need to accept salvation responsibly, a salvation that Luke emphasises, more than the other evangelists, with a visible and communal character.⁹⁰ The present reader, who accepts Jesus as saviour, is called to maintain an active role in the communal acceptance of salvation.

The verb καλέω appears again in Luke 2:23, within the quotation of Exod 13:2, 12, 15. Again, the passive voice, in this case in the future tense, κληθήσεται, gives it an enduring value and, as in Luke 1:31, can be understood as a command. The repetition of the verb καλέω serves the model author to indicate who the Child is and what he is called, but above all to underline that, christologically, he is the son of the Most High (1:32), the son of God (1:35), and holy (2:23). The reader is invited to understand and to call holy the Child who is presented in the Temple, welcoming this model as an example of the holiness of the community.⁹¹ The acceptance of the text moves from saying to doing: the way to call Jesus holy will be to live in community as saints.

4.2. The Law of Moses as the Law of the Lord

The threefold explicit mention of the Law, together with the references to customs, precepts and traditions contained therein, builds a model reader on the basis of the fulfilment of the Law.⁹² The noun νόμος appears for the first time in Luke 2:22 accompanied by the genitive Μωϋσέως.⁹³ The syntagma κατὰ τόν νόμον Μωϋσέως leaves open a double reading of Moses' relationship⁹⁴ to the Law: on the one hand, he can be seen as the transmitter, on the other, as the author of the Law. This perspective fits perfectly with the contemporary

88 The impersonal passive in v. 21 may refer to Jesus' parents but also, in connection with the angel's command in Luke 1:31, it may be a way to avoid the name of God.

89 Luke, unlike Matthew (Matt 1:21), makes no reference to the etymology of Jesus' name. However, as the literary context shows, it cannot be ruled out that this meaning resonated in the Lucan community.

90 Cf. M. Grilli, *Quale rapporto tra i due Testamenti? Riflessione critica sui modelli ermeneutici classici concernenti l'unità delle Scritture* (EP.NS 10; Bologna: EDB 2007) 165.

91 Acts 9:13, 32; 26:10 refers to the followers of Jesus as 'the saints'.

92 Cf. Tyson, *Images of Judaism in Luke-Acts*, 49.

93 Cf. Koehne, *The Septuagintal Isaianic Use of Nomos*, 104.

94 By introducing Μωϋσέως for the first time (Luke 2:22) it indicates, on the one hand, that the model author presupposes a certain knowledge in the model reader and, on the other hand, that the simple linkage to the Law is sufficient to continue the narrative. Cf. Tyson, *Images of Judaism in Luke-Acts*, 26–28.

Judaism of Jesus,⁹⁵ which is also shown in the authority given to the figure of Moses in the third Gospel.⁹⁶

The text continues, replacing *Μωϋσέως* by *κυρίου* in Luke 2:23, 24, producing an assimilation or equalisation between the two: the Law belongs to and has its origin in both Moses and the Lord. The importance of Moses, appearing in the first syntagma (v. 22), is relativised by the repetition of the Lord on two occasions (vv. 23, 24).

The difficulties in identifying the quotation in v. 23 become an opportunity to ‘re-read’ Exod 13:2, 12, 15 in a communicative key. The reference to Exod 13:2 shows YHWH’s words to Moses, while Exod 13:12, 15 picks up Moses’ words to the people. Thus, the communicative strategy of Luke 2:23b interweaves the words of YHWH and the words of Moses, which sound with the same voice in the context of Exod 13, but above all they ‘re-sound’, that is, they sound again, harmoniously in the first explicit quotation of the work of Luke. The emphasis is not on literalness, but on the overall meaning of the text and on the memory of the words of YHWH to Moses and of Moses to the people.⁹⁷ In short, the model reader has the Law as a valid and current reference: the Law of Moses, the Law of the Lord.

4.3. The Offering: From Ransom to Presentation

The life situation of the group, as indicated in the communicative strategy, reflects a community that is redefining the relationship with Judaism and enhancing its elements of identity. The Lucan community suffers exclusion and opposition from some Jewish leaders, which leads it, on the one hand, to discover more clearly its differences from other groups and, on the other hand, to define more precisely its identity in continuity with the history of Israel, especially in the infancy narrative.⁹⁸ It is within this process of self-definition in relation to other already established groups that Luke 2:21–24 should be understood.

If the edict of Augustus to register (Luke 2:1–4) is the reason why Joseph and Mary go to Bethlehem, in the case of Luke 2:21–24, it is the Law of the Lord that will provoke the arrival of the Holy Family in Jerusalem. In this sense, it can be affirmed with R.B. Hays that Luke values obedience to the Torah, not through direct didactics, but through narratives that exemplify it.⁹⁹ The actual readers are not called upon only to understand on

⁹⁵ Cf. Koehne, *The Septuagintal Isaianic Use of Nomos*, 36.

⁹⁶ Cf. J. Lierman, *The New Testament Moses: Christian Perceptions of Moses and Israel in the Setting of Jewish Religion* (WUNT 2/173; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2004) 156–157, 172–173; I. Moreno Sanz, *Jesús y Moisés en diálogo. Significado y función de la figura de Moisés en la obra lucana* (Colección Monografías y Tesis 79; Estella: Verbo Divino 2021) 391–412.

⁹⁷ Not unnoticed is the imperative ‘remember’ of the Masoretic Text (זָכוֹר) translated by the LXX (μνημονεύετε, Exod 13:3) which opens Moses’ address to the people and which stresses remembrance as a command.

⁹⁸ Cf. R. Aguirre Monasterio, “La segunda generación y la conservación de la memoria de Jesús: El surgimiento de los evangelios,” *Así empezó el cristianismo*, 2 ed. (ed. R. Aguirre Monasterio) (Agora 28; Estella: EVD 2010) 241–242.

⁹⁹ Cf. R.B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press 2016) 208.

a theoretical level the fulfilment of the Law, but also to act, like the Holy Family going up to Jerusalem, in conformity with the Law¹⁰⁰ as a sign of obedience to the Lord. The differences between the journey to Bethlehem and to Jerusalem are accentuated by the fact that the emperor is simply given something, while the presentation of the Child is given to someone. What formally seems to refer to the ransom of the firstborn becomes pragmatically the presentation of Jesus.

The final subordinate proposition and the verb *παραστήσαι* (Luke 2:22b) omit both the subject and the direct object and indicate only the indirect object (*τῷ κυρίῳ*). In this way, the communicative strategy leaves in the background both Jesus' parents (implied subject) and Jesus himself (implied direct object) in order to pragmatically reinforce the syntagma *τῷ κυρίῳ*. With this brief proposition, the text does not place the focus of attention on who presents, nor what is presented, but rather before whom, i.e. the Lord.

The presentation of Jesus before the Lord indicates that the reasons why he is brought to Jerusalem are primarily theological. The Temple is not specifically named until Luke 2:27, placing the presentation to the Lord before the place of the presentation. That is to say, the Lord is highlighted and placed in relation to the Temple and confirms that the importance of the Temple was that it was the place of the Lord's presence.¹⁰¹

Jesus, as the firstborn, was the Lord's possession and, therefore, was to be redeemed.¹⁰² Regardless of the reasons why the author does not narrate the payment of the ransom, the focus is on the presentation to the Lord. In this way, the power of the sign is doubled, the Child has not been ransomed and, therefore, does not return completely to the ownership of the parents (cf. Luke 2:49), but, above all, he has been presented to the Lord, above all, he has been presented to the Lord and remains his property and will remain so from now on.¹⁰³ Like little Samuel, Jesus is brought to the Temple, not to be ransomed, but to be presented to the Lord (1 Sam 1:11, 22, 28).¹⁰⁴

The verb *παρίστημι* can be translated by 'to present', as has been done so far, but it also means 'to offer' and both senses are complementary in the text.¹⁰⁵ Presentation and consecration, therefore, can be seen as two sides of the same coin or, rather, as cause (presentation) and effect (consecration).¹⁰⁶ In the place of God's encounter with his people, the Temple, instead of ransoming the firstborn, Jesus is publicly offered to God, his Father.

100 The fathers act according to the word of God, one of the important themes of Luke's theology, cf. Rodríguez Carmona, *Evangelio según San Lucas*, 45.

101 Cf. Tyson, *Images of Judaism in Luke-Acts*, 184.

102 Cf. García Pérez – Herranz Marco, *La infancia de Jesús según Lucas*, 87.

103 It is necessary to connect the holiness and destiny of Jesus with the presentation to the Lord. It is not a question of the ransom of the Child, but of consecration to God which he understands as 'presenting him to the Lord' in a sacrificial sense with what was announced by the angel in 1:35 'he will be holy'.

104 M. Giacobbe, *Luke the Chronicler: The Narrative Arc of Samuel-Kings and Chronicles in Luke-Acts* (BibInt; Leiden: Brill 2023) 136–141.

105 Cf. García Serrano, *The Presentation in the Temple*, 168–169, note 64.

106 The verbs give (נתן), present (עָבַר) and consecrate (שָׁדַד) to the Lord are found interwoven in Exod 13 in the prescriptions concerning the ransom of the firstborn and are to be interpreted in the same way in Luke 2:23, cf. Brin, *Studies in Biblical Law*, 215–220.

A final aspect is presented as a further sign of the passage from the model reader to real readers. The apparent poverty of the offering - the two turtledoves or the two young pigeons - the usual offering of the poor for the purification of the mother (Luke 2:24), contrasts with the wealth of the offerers. Instead of paying the five shekels of silver for the ransom of the firstborn, which the text does not mention, they offer their son to the Lord in an act of generous self-giving.

4.4. The Dialogue between the Two Testaments

The whole infancy narrative is steeped in the traditional Jewish religious atmosphere, but especially Luke 2:21–24.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, both the events narrated and the language used require a knowledge of Jewish customs that complements the brief information of the narrator.¹⁰⁸

The presence of several elements that connect with Jewish customs, together with the references to Israel's messianic promises and hopes, do not fit in with certain anti-Jewish assessments in the interpretation of the third Gospel, as they also show the author's close connection, especially in the infancy narrative, with the people of Israel.¹⁰⁹ At the same time, as one finds this sensitivity and concern for Jewish customs, it is recognisable that the text has been crafted without neglecting readers from non-Jewish backgrounds. Indeed, the explanations of such customs, however minimal, may reflect Lucan sensitivity to the Hellenistic audience.¹¹⁰

It is possible to claim that the narrator was not precise in the details of the legislation and in the development of some Jewish customs.¹¹¹ However, these inaccuracies make it clear that the communicative strategy does not lie in listing and describing particular aspects, but in highlighting the theological core of the event, which he intended to make clear to his readers.

The theme of the presentation to the Lord in the Temple reminds the reader, familiar with the Scriptures of Israel, of Samuel's presentation (1 Sam 1:22–28).¹¹² The readers, however, will notice that Jesus is not presented according to the model of a single character, but rather different elements of various characters can be recognised, which theologically enrich the whole story.¹¹³ In contrast to typological reading, in which the figures of the Old Testament are fulfilled in the New Testament and are to be understood in a progressive and substitutive sense, in dialogical reading, the aim is to listen to the various voices and texts

107 Cf. Rodríguez Carmona, *Evangelio según San Lucas*, 43.

108 Cf. M. Crimella, "Veridizione e Verità nel Racconto di Luca," *BA* 7/2 (2017) 240–241, <https://doi.org/10.31743/ba.947>.

109 Cf. G.M. Smiga, *Pain and Polemic: Anti-Judaism in the Gospels* (Stimulus; New York – Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press 1992) 130–133. Already from the title of the section 'Abrogating anti-Judaism in Luke-Act' one can understand the need for a new approach to the evaluation of Jews and Judaism in Luke's work.

110 Cf. Bock, *Luke*, I, 231.

111 Cf. Tyson, *Images of Judaism in Luke-Acts*, 34.

112 According to R.E. Brown, the model for the presentation of Jesus is Samuel (1 Sam 1–2), cf. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 450.

113 Cf. J. McWhirter, *Rejected Prophets: Jesus and His Witnesses in Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 2013) 33.

of both the One and the Other Testament.¹¹⁴ In this way, the texts can be connected by theme, content or characters making possible a re-reading that goes beyond typology, allegory, and fulfilment and that, in a genuine way in the work of Luke, brings about a dialogue in a narrative world replete with biblical memories.¹¹⁵ The relationship between Israel and the Church begins to be built on the rereading of the Scriptures of Israel, which ring with authority again and foster constant dialogue, not only between the characters involved, but also, and perhaps primarily, between the community that in Luke 2:21–24 listens to the text and contemplates the actions according to the Law of Moses and the communities that continue to read Luke's Gospel today. Today's readers should find in the continuity of the reading of Scripture God's relationship with history, which constantly nourishes the hope of his people.

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¹¹⁴ Cf. Grilli, *Quale rapporto tra i due Testamenti?*, 51, 194.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 193–194.

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