

Andrés García Serrano, *The Presentation in the Temple. The Narrative Function of Lk 2:22-39 in Luke-Acts* (Analecta Biblica 197; Roma: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2012). Pp. 448. € 37. ISBN 978-88-7653-197-2.

KRZYSZTOF MIELCAREK

Institute of Biblical Studies, The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin
address: Aleje Racławickie 14, 20-950 Lublin, Poland; e-mail: krzysztof.mielcarek@kul.pl

The book of Andrés García Serrano, a priest of the Archdiocese of Madrid, is a revised version of his S.S.D. thesis defended under the guidance of Professor Dean Bécharde SJ. The author studies the passage of Jesus' Presentation in the Temple (Luke 2:22-39). His publication has been included into the Pontifical Biblical Institute's *Analecta Biblica* series (No. 197), which is a sign of recognised quality.

At first glance taking such a field seems a risky matter since the number of scholarly contributions to the first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke is vast. The author is fully aware of the situation. He reveals that in the first chapter of his book giving a comprehensive analysis of the *status quaestionis* of both Luke chaps. 1-2 in general, and of the pericope he has decided to study. However, among so many detailed publications the author could not find any lengthy investigation which analysed the pericope of his interest. Thus, he consequently claims his thesis to be "the first scientific study to address all significant aspects of Lk 2:22-39".

In order to explain accurately all the features of the "Presentation in the Temple" García Serrano makes a graphical difference in his use of the word *presentation*. Any reference to the passage of Luke 2:22-39 causes him to capitalize the first letter (*Presentation*). While referring to a narrative presentation as a characterization of the identity and mission of a protagonist he uses the lower case.

At the beginning of his thesis Fr. García Serrano lists a number of findings in order to pose some crucial questions and to set the goal of his research. He also gives some subsequent steps in order to achieve it. The author notices that Luke 2:22-39 is part of the Lukan infancy narrative and that Luke 1-2 is truly a Lukan composition. He follows other scholars in their conviction that Luke added first two chapters on a later stage of his

work “possibly even after the composition of Acts”, although this opinion cannot be taken for granted and many exegetes would not agree that Luke was short of an initial literary or narrative plan. Nevertheless, the infancy narrative was surely thought as a kind of introduction to the main topics of Luke-Acts. Lastly, the author points to the fact that the pericope of the Presentation in the Temple “breaks the parallelism” between the sequence of scenes dedicated to John and Jesus in the infancy narrative and therefore is of fundamental importance to Lukan composition. Two questions: “What is the role Lk 2:22-39 play within the general introduction of Luke-Acts?” and “What is the narrative function of this passage in the whole Lukan work?” seem to be the main goal of the study of the San Damaso University lecturer.

Since Luke 1–2 is called an infancy narrative, the narrative analysis is a natural choice as a tool. As García Serrano has put it himself: “What stands at the heart of this dissertation is an attention to the way in which the narrative works as a process of communication, from the author to the reader”. However, the author also resorts to redaction criticism, for in his dissertation he deals with some literary developments throughout the entire work of Luke. The narrative analysis is employed to studying the passage itself and the development of its distinctive topics throughout Luke-Acts. The redaction criticism helps him to compare the Lukan composition with its synoptic parallels and to discuss some issues of the sources.

The book consists of short introduction, five extensive chapters and a compact but profound final conclusions. It opens with a two page acknowledgements written by the author followed by a preface prepared by F. Bovon (the main reader of the book). An exhaustive bibliography divided into primary and secondary sources and two lists of useful indices close the monograph. Although the reader might wonder why the register of the Old Testament texts is not directly followed by the New Testament one. In fact, they are separated by pseudoepigrapha, Dead Sea scrolls and Hellenistic Jewish references.

The author has planned the order of the chapters to fulfil his goal of explaining the narrative function of the Presentation passage in Luke-Acts. Thus, he begins with a study on the *status quaestionis* of the Lukan infancy narrative in general (p. 30-74) and the pericope of the Presentation in the Temple in particular (p. 75-83). The survey covers the most significant studies representing historical tradition criticism, source criticism, form criticism (Agua Pérez, Ballhorn, Benoit, Berlingieri, Boismard, Bovon, Boxal, R.E. Brown, W.J. Brown, Bultmann, Burrows, Cullmann, Cunningham, Daniélou, Derret, Dibelius, Drury, Erdmann, Fitzmyer, Figueras, Flender, Freed, George, Grelot, Gryglewicz, Harrington, Kuhn, Laurentin, Legrand, Manicardi, Masini,

Millar, Miyoshi, Mount, Muños Iglesias, Neirynek, Nolland, O’Fearghail, Ogg, Orsatti, Osborne, Plummer, Radle, Reicke, Rossé, Rouiller, Ruddick, Sánchez Mielgo, Schnackenburg, Schürmann, Schweizer, Serra, Schürer, Spitta, Talbert, Valentini, Vérmes, Wright, Zimmermann) as well as narrative, rhetorical and semiotic analyses (Aletti, Cavaletti, Coleridge, Gerber, Gros Louis, Gueret, Kilgallen, Kurz, Létourneau, Meynet, Oliver, Perry, Ryan, Tannehill, Thomas) along with sociological and feminist approaches (Dornisch, Horsley, Prema, Schüssler-Fiorenza). One can only positively wonder at the well balanced choice of sources in terms of languages, which many times is not the case in many English, German, French or Italian studies.

In the second chapter of his monograph, A. García carries out a detailed analysis of various biographies written in Greco-Roman and Jewish literature at the time of Luke-Acts (Pseudo-Callisthenes’ *The Life and Deeds of Alexander of Macedon*, Quintus Curtius Rufus’s *The History of Alexander*, Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives*, Suetonius’s *Lives of the Caesars*, the Old Testament, Philo’s *Life of Moses*, Pseudo-Philo’s *Biblical Antiquities*, and Josephus’s *Antiquities*). In his opinion the reader gains this way a proper horizon for a better grasp of the narrative patterns across different texts. By revealing certain convergences and divergences between Luke 1–2 and other infancy narratives the author determines the literary function of the first two chapters of the Gospel and the role of studied passage in the entire Lukan work. However, the key to the author’s choice of ancient sources is somewhat unclear and readers might ask themselves if biographies discussed are surely representative of their genre.

The next step of the Spanish exegete is a narrative study of Luke 2:22-39. There he focuses on delimitation of the pericope according to some narrative criteria, and calls reader attention to the structure and narrative plot of the passage. Nonetheless, discussing in detail every piece of the pericope makes it difficult for the reader to find out what is the reason of such a wordy procedure. In his synthesis of the chapter he comes to a conclusion that describing passage as purification or redemption of Jesus cannot be viewed as the accurate one, but such a claim can hardly be found among contemporary scholarship. The only possible meaning of the scene is the presentation of Jesus and it is quite obvious for Lukan work specialists.

The immediate literary context of the presentation in the Temple is the subject matter of the fourth chapter. García Serrano analyses there “the progressive characterization of Jesus” within Luke 1–2. His goal is to determine the characteristic function of Luke 2:22-39 within the Lukan infancy narrative. In agreement with most commentators he makes out seven sections (1:5-25, 26-38, 39-56, 57-80; 2:1-21, 22-39, and 40-52). In that he especially stresses

the effectiveness of comparison of the expectations concerning Jesus implied in earlier passages. Completing his task he seems convinced that the plot of the Lukan infancy narrative is in gradual progress having its climactic point in the presence of the Child in the Temple by adding three important features to the earlier characterisation of Jesus (Gentiles, conflict and tensions present within Jesus' mission, and the Temple). On the end of this chapter the Spanish scholar included an appendix with other four possible presentations of Jesus that follow the infancy narrative (John's preaching [3:1-18], the baptism of Jesus [3,21-22], temptation [4:1-13], Jesus' visit to Nazareth [4,16-30]). In all of them some main characteristics of Jesus' identity could be found, but the prominent role of the second sequence belong to Luke 4:16-30 just as it is the case with Luke 2:29-39 in the infancy narrative. Nevertheless, the author believes that the narrative threads of the Nazareth passage are only mere repetition of the themes already asserted by Simeon in the scene of the Presentation.

Chapter five is an attempt to seek the function of the Presentation passage in its wider literary context, i.e. the Lukan composition as a whole, for García Serrano believes that the significance of the pericope spreads out to the entire Lukan narrative. Thus, according to the Spaniard, one should not isolate Luke 2:22-39 nor any other passage from its complete story, otherwise "it loses power and significance". While, on contrary, a careful study of the Lukan work may result in discovering of some previously hidden connotations. He follows his own advice analysing few key-threads of Luke-Acts (universalism, division in Israel, commission by Jesus, Temple). Admitting that many of his observations have been made already by a number of scholars, he claims however, that bringing those remarks together makes them a clearer background to the proper and deeper understanding of the Presentation pericope. According to him Luke has given it a role of a "hermeneutical framework" for interpreting the main characters of Luke-Acts. To show some similarities and differences between his literary protagonists Luke uses a *syncrisis* device.

In his final conclusions García Serrano defines Luke 2:22-39 as a narrative presentation. In his opinion the passage was purposely fit by the Gospel writer in the beginning of Luke-Acts, where Luke introduces two resolution plots according to Jewish customs and messianic expectations and then resolves them by a revelation plot of Jesus. It is a climactic point of the narrative of Luke 1-2 with most complete characterisation of Jesus followed in the further development of the Luke-Acts story. The exegete from Madrid provides also the reader with some implications of theological trait. The announcement-fulfilment notion concerning main figures of the composition (Jesus and His

disciples) along with the Luke's christology and ecclesiology are the crucial unifying factors of his two-volume-work.

The text of the monograph is well published and free of typographical errors, although from time to time one may spot a misspelled word or a term exchanged with the wrong one. The content of the book does cover the issues that A. García Serrano had declared to study. He has proved to be both a careful researcher and a diligent scholar well oriented in the field. In fact, it seems sometimes that he was too diligent to see that some of the problems he discussed are either obvious to everyone or well established in the contemporary scholarship. However, Lukan composition is so thoroughly examined by the exegetes of the last two hundred years, that such general approach in order to present a broad picture of the narrative function of Luke 2:22-39 in Luke-Acts is fully justified. The monograph is to be recommended to all interested in the Lukan work and in the narrative analyses of the Gospels.