

Preaching Luke's Gospel: Some Insights from John Henry Newman

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The tasks confronting the preacher in this liturgical year of Luke are complex and manifold. Some of these tasks are general issues relating to the interpretation of the biblical text, such as the relationship between the parts and the whole – an issue highlighted by more holistic approaches to the gospels such as narrative criticism. Others are more specifically related to the interpretation of Luke's Gospel, such as ongoing questions of genre, or consideration of the precise relationship between the Gospel and Acts, with some recent appeals for 'loosing the hyphen' in the widely-used phrase 'Luke-Acts'.¹ Still others are concerned with the ministry of preaching. How does one make the move as it were from the text – or the text in the study – to the pulpit, from interpretation to application? Or does such an articulation of the preacher's task betray a misunderstanding of the complex processes at work both in exegesis and in homiletics, by treating application as a mere 'add-on' to a prior hermeneutical task? Recent trends in biblical scholarship, meanwhile, with their turn towards, on the one hand, bold theological readings of scriptural texts, and on the other, a renewed emphasis on the history of a text's reception, seem only to compound the difficulties further.

In this year which is not only the year of Luke in the Sunday Lectionary, but also the year of John Henry Newman's beatification by Benedict XVI, this article will examine examples of Newman's preaching of Luke's Gospel, to see what insights such an exploration might yield. Of course, Newman, like any preacher of the gospel, was a person of his time. One cannot straightforwardly transpose the preaching of late Georgian and Victorian England into a different context with perhaps very different concerns. Yet Newman would appear to be a worthy exemplar for contemporary preachers of Luke, for at least two reasons. First, we find an interpretation of scripture which combines an awareness

¹ E.g. M.C. Parsons and R.I. Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

of contemporary critical questions with a growing appreciation of patristic exegesis, echoing more recent calls for scholars to attend to the early history of effects of New Testament texts,² or to ‘rejoin a long conversation’ in which the Fathers’ scriptural interpretation is not dismissed as uncritical and unrestrained allegorising.³ Second, in Newman we find a pastor passionately concerned to allow Scripture to speak to his hearers – whether Oxford undergraduates and dons or parish congregations in Littlemore and Birmingham – and ultimately to change their lives.

Newman the Preacher

Of the many contributions made by John Henry Newman to the ecclesial and intellectual life of this country, it was perhaps his preaching which had the greatest impact on a popular level, both in spoken and published form. Oxford undergraduates would regularly forego dinner in college in order to hear his 4 o’clock Sunday sermons, while many more were exposed to his preaching in written form through publication of his Anglican *Parochial and Plain Sermons* and *Sermons Bearing on Subjects of the Day*, or later volumes of his Catholic preaching, such as *Sermons Preached on Various Occasions*. Accounts of his preaching ministry, meanwhile, have become almost legendary. One of the most famous is that of Matthew Arnold, reminiscing after a period of some forty years:

Who could resist the charm of that spiritual apparition, gliding in the dim afternoon light through the aisles of St Mary’s, rising into the pulpit, and then, in the most entrancing of voices, breaking the silence with words and thoughts which were a religious music – sweet, subtle, mournful? I seem to hear him still ...⁴

Or observe the following words from James Anthony Froude, younger brother of Newman’s close associate Hurrell, describing a sermon of Newman’s on the Lord’s Passion:

For a few moments there was a breathless silence. Then, in a low, clear voice, of which the faintest vibration was audible in the

² M. Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word: Refocusing New Testament Study* (Studies in Theological Interpretation; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2006). New commentary series which reflect this rediscovery of patristic exegesis include *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (IVP) and *The Church’s Bible* (Eerdmans), as well as the *Blackwell Bible Commentary* with its interest in wider reception history.

³ E.g. L.T. Johnson and W.S. Kurz SJ, *The Future of Catholic Biblical Scholarship* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2002), especially pp. 35-118.

⁴ Cited in R. Strange, *John Henry Newman: A Mind Alive* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2008), p. 124.

farthest corner of St Mary's, he said, 'Now, I bid you recollect that He to whom these things were done was Almighty God'. It was as if an electric stroke had gone through the church, as if every person present understood for the first time the meaning of what he had all his life been saying.⁵

Or consider his famous Parting of Friends sermon, preached at Littlemore on Sunday 25th September 1843. One of those present, Edward Bellasis, wrote of the preacher to his wife in the following terms:

... the faltering voice, the long pauses, the perceptible and hardly successful efforts at restraining himself, together with the deep interest of the subject, were almost overpowering.⁶

In this latter case, the emotion of the occasion, which had Dr Pusey in tears almost throughout, may partly explain the powerful impact. Nevertheless, as Ian Ker notes, Newman's preaching technique was the antithesis of normal oratory: 'The sermons were read, with hardly any change in the inflexion of the voice and without any gesture on the part of the preacher, whose eyes remained fixed on the text in front of him.'⁷ The later Catholic sermons published in *Discourses to Addressed to Mixed Congregations* seem to be an exception: in Ker's words 'the rhetoric is often more Italianate than Newmanian.'⁸

Rather it seems to have been their subject matter, as well as the character of the man himself, which had such an impact on Newman's hearers. Commentators regularly stress the emphasis in the *Parochial and Plain Sermons* on personal holiness, effected through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer, though with a strong dose of realism about human nature. Avery Dulles singles out three particular themes which recur with impressive regularity: repentance, conversion, and obedience.⁹ This is coupled with a 'powerfully imaginative realization' by which the sermons presented to the congregation Christ himself, as manifested in the Gospels.¹⁰

⁵ J.A. Froude, *Short Studies on Great Subjects* (London, 1893), vol. IV, p. 286.

⁶ Cited in S. Gilley, *Newman and his Age* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1990), p. 220.

⁷ I. Ker, *John Henry Newman: A Biography* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 91.

⁸ Ker, *John Henry Newman* p. 342. Newman himself described them as 'more rhetorical than my former Sermons': C.S. Dessain et al. (eds.), *Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, vol. xiii (Thomas Nelson, 1963), p. 335.

⁹ A. Dulles SJ, *John Henry Newman* (London and New York: Continuum, 2002), p. 25.

¹⁰ Ker, *John Henry Newman*, p. 100.

Thus we turn to his preaching of the Gospel of Luke. In his published sermons, sermon texts from the Third Gospel feature with relative regularity. Of the twelve sermons on gospel texts in the first volume of his *Parochial and Plain Sermons*,¹¹ for example, four are on passages from Matthew, just one from Mark, three from John, and four from Luke. Similarly, a cursory glance at his *Discourses to Addressed to Mixed Congregations* reveals a discussion of the Lucan story about the woman at the meal in the Pharisee's house (Discourse IV: identified as Mary Magdalen), and an examination of the parable of Dives and Lazarus (Discourse VI). There are also a number of sermon notes and plans surviving on gospel passages from Luke.¹²

Newman on Luke

What did Newman think about Luke the Evangelist? Fortunately a sermon of his for St Luke's Day is available in printed form (Sermon 261), preached in St Mary the Virgin, Oxford on 18th October in 1830, 1833, 1836, 1838 and 1841.¹³ This text, preserved in the archives of the Birmingham Oratory, provides a snapshot from his Anglican days of his view of St Luke and his writings, in a sermon with practical and pastoral focus.¹⁴

The full title of the lecture-sermon is 'St Luke, and thence on the variety of fortune and character found in the first followers of Christ.' Taking as his starting-point a phrase from Luke's parable of the great banquet – 'highways and hedges' (Lk 14:23) – Newman explores the diverse 'specimens of holiness' among the first followers of Christ, as 'a type of the general Christian Church'. In contrast to 'simple fishermen' such as Peter and John, or Matthew 'the active and expert publican', Luke exemplifies holiness among a Gentile of cultivated taste or education.¹⁵ Newman begins by highlighting three features distinctive to him:

¹¹ J.H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (new edition; London, Oxford and Cambridge: Rivingtons, 1868-1870): of the eight volumes, the first six contain Parochial Sermons preached in St Mary's between 1825 and 1843.

¹² See J. Tolhurst (ed.), *Sermon Notes of John Henry Cardinal Newman 1849 – 1878* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2000).

¹³ For the text, see J.H. Newman, ed. F.J. McGrath and P. Murray, *Sermons 1824 – 1843: volume III: Sermons and Lectures for Saints' Days and Holy Days and General Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2010), pp. 81-87. On St Luke's Day 1830 there were only nine persons present, a fact which Newman attributed to the undergraduates being absent for the Long Vacation: p. xvii, n. 24.

¹⁴ Another sermon or 'lecture', 'on St Luke and his gospel', preached in St Clement's Oxford on January 29th 1826, is also printed in the same volume: Newman, ed. McGrath and Murray, *Sermons 1824 – 1843*, vol. III, pp. 5-11.

¹⁵ Comparison with the earlier St Clement's sermon, which restricts itself to scriptural references in constructing Luke's biography, reveals the growing influence of the Fathers: he knows, for example, of the tradition that Luke was 'a native of Antioch' (p. 82), attested already by Eusebius, *H.E.* 3.4.

1. That he is known to us principally by the two volumes he wrote, which 'are to be accounted the first and second part of one narrative concerning the life and actions of Christ and His Apostles' (p. 82);
2. That although he is acquainted with Paul, and there are traces of Paul in Luke's Gospel (Newman makes the favourite observation of New Testament scholars that Luke and Paul overlap in the words of institution at the Last Supper), the evidence of Luke 1:1-4 makes unlikely the supposition of 'some' that he wrote his Gospel at Paul's dictation;
3. That the intended audience of Luke and Acts differs e.g. from that of John's Gospel: 'both are written, not to Christians generally as histories, but they are addressd to a certain <particular> Christian friend', Theophilus.

Newman, then, is not uncritical in his reading of Luke, showing awareness of contemporary critical discussions as well as similar discussions in the Fathers. Though he presumes the Pauline authorship of Hebrews (p. 83), that would not be unusual among his contemporaries, not least given the title 'Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews' in the Authorised Version.

Most important for Newman, however, is the fact that 'St Luke instructs us, not by his own life (of the particulars of which we are ignorant) but by the life of his Lord and Saviour which he has left us' (p. 83). It is Christ who is the true subject matter of his Gospel, and any attempt to glean biographical information about the evangelist, however useful, must always remain secondary. This means, moreover, that Luke is honoured whenever his writings are read, and Newman notes how rich the Lucan lectionary provision of the Church of England is:

... and he has our thoughts, not once a year, but for nearly one half of the days in the whole year even above his fellow Evangelists his voice is heard in the service of the Church, telling us of Christ and of His Apostles – And we are indebted to him, not only for one out the of the four lives of Christ, but for many particulars of His <Christ's> history and teaching, which the other Evangelists do not mention (p. 83).

Newman proceeds to lists many of them: the annunciations to Zechariah and Mary; the angelic appearance to the shepherds; the presentation and finding in the Temple; the woman washing Jesus' feet at a feast; the story of Zacchaeus; the penitent thief; the Road to Emmaus; the distinctly

Lucan parables of the barren fig tree, the prodigal son, the publican and the Pharisee, the good Samaritan, and the importunate widow: ‘these and many other things we should have known nothing of, had not God inspired St Luke to record them. Let us be thankful for the gift’ (p. 84).

Parochial Sermons: Mary and Martha (Lk 10:38-42)

But what do specific examples of Newman’s preaching of Luke look like? This is not as easy to ascertain as might at first appear. For Newman’s preaching technique is often to use the scriptural text as a springboard for a discourse on a particular theme or to develop a specific point, drawing upon a range of other biblical texts which support the unfolding argument, and particular concerns and controversies of the age are seldom far below the surface. But there are sermons where, albeit addressing the needs of his congregation, and of subsequent readers, he sits with the whole passage and teases out its potential. One such example from his Anglican days is his parish sermon on the distinctly Lucan story of Mary and Martha (preached on Sunday 26th October 1834).¹⁶ The text in the Authorised Version reads as follows:

Now it came to pass, as they went, and he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

This pericope has often been read as a commendation of the contemplative over the active life. Though in places Newman’s homiletic interpretation seems to come close to this, it is actually rather more subtly refreshing. His starting-point with this difficult story is to treat it with the reverence it deserves, as one of those traditions which the evangelists, through divine inspiration, have selected and preserved for us because of their ‘especial usefulness’ for times to come: ‘Let us then humbly try with this thought before us, and the help of His grace, to gain some benefit from the text’ (p. 319). This sounds like a nineteenth-century anticipation of Brian Daley’s recent advocacy of a patristic ‘hermeneutic of piety’, or Luke Timothy Johnson’s similar call for a ‘hermeneutics of generosity or

¹⁶ *Parochial and Plain Sermons* vol. iii, pp. 318-335.

charity' to balance a 'hermeneutic of suspicion' in approaching the biblical text.¹⁷

Although he knows of differences between the gospels, he suffers no qualms in turning to another evangelist, in this case John, to shed light on gaps and ambiguities in the Lucan texts. Martha and Mary are introduced here in Luke for the first time, with no further explanation as to their identity or origins. But they also appear in the Fourth Gospel, as sisters of Lazarus and inhabitants of Bethany (John 11-12). Mary is further identified as the woman who anointed Jesus' feet (John 11:2; 12:1-8). While more recent scripture scholars might hesitate before using another evangelist to fill a gap in a gospel narrative, Newman's juxtaposition of passages from the two gospels bears fruit in this case. Martha's almost frenetic energy and Mary's patient sitting and attention to the Lord are character traits reflected also in the Johannine story of Lazarus: 'Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house' (John 11:20); 'There they made him a supper; and Martha served ... Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair ...' (John 12:2-3).

Newman's primary concern, however, is that he and his hearers gain 'some benefit from the text'. So what is the 'Martha' role, and what the 'Mary' role, in the community of Christ's disciples? The first and most striking point is that, although 'Mary hath chosen that good part', Newman regards both roles as having been ordained by God for particular members of the Church. Indeed, while often read as placing Martha in the role of 'servant', Newman uses such terminology of her sister:

Martha still directs and acts, while Mary is the retired and modest servant of Christ, who, at liberty from worldly duties, loves to sit at His feet and hear His voice, and silently honours Him with her best, without obtruding herself upon His sacred presence (p. 320).

There are, argues Newman, two ways of serving Christ: by active business (Martha's way) and quiet adoration (the way of Mary). Nor are these paths chosen by Christians themselves, but allotted by God. He notes how many will be allotted the way of Martha: 'The necessity of

¹⁷ Johnson and Kurz, *The Future of Catholic Biblical Scholarship*, pp. 59-60; B.E. Daley SJ, 'Is Patristic Exegesis Still Usable? Some Reflections on Early Christian Interpretation of the Psalms,' in E.F. Davies and R.B. Hays (eds), *The Art of Reading Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2003), pp. 69-88.

getting a livelihood, the calls of a family, the duties of station and office, these are God's tokens, tracing out Martha's path for the many' (p. 322). He then goes on to enumerate the various categories of Christians who have a Mary-shaped vocation: the aged, exemplified in Anna, the prophetess of Luke's Presentation story, and the importunate widow of Luke 18; priests who minister at the altar, as opposed to deacons who take care of the Church's worldly affairs and bishops who govern; children; the unmarried;¹⁸ finally, 'the souls of those who have lived and died in the faith and fear of Christ'. These are like Moses on the mountain, 'lifting up holy hands to God, while their brethren fight, or meditating on the promises, or hearing their Saviour's teaching, or adorning and beautifying His worship' (p. 326).

The second point Newman derives from this passage is that Mary's portion is the better of the two. But he is concerned that his audience understand what this means:

Therefore, what He intimated surely was, that Martha's portion was full of snares, as being one of worldly labour, but that Mary could not easily go wrong in hers; that we may be busy in a wrong way, we cannot well adore Him except in a right one; that to serve God by prayer and praise continually, when we can do so consistently with other duties, is the pursuit of the "one thing needful," and emphatically "that good part which shall not be taken away from us" (pp. 326-327).

So Christians can follow Mary even in the midst of Martha-like duties. Moreover, Christians can experience the way of Mary at certain times, and the way of Martha at others. The Church under persecution can have Martha's portion befall it, and Mary's portion withheld from it. He regards the three hundred years from apostolic times to the emergence of Constantine as a period when Martha's lot prevailed. Finally, he poses a challenge to the Church of England of his own day, as to whether it has become an age 'when Mary's portion is altogether let alone and decried':

Blessed indeed are they whom Christ calls near to Him to be His own peculiar attendants and familiar friends; more blessed if they obey and fulfil their calling! Blessed even if they are allowed to seize intervals of such service towards Him; but favoured and honoured beyond thought, if they can, without breach of duty, put aside worldly things will full purpose of heart, renounce the

¹⁸ In the case of the unmarried, Newman notes striking verbal similarities in the Greek between the Lucan passage and Paul's discussion of the unmarried at 1 Cor. 7:34.

pursuit of wealth, keep clear of family cares, and present themselves as a holy offering, without spot or blemish, to Him who died for them (pp. 333-334).

Newman's reading of the Martha-Mary story is complex and subtle, but it is so because Luke's original story, just like his deceptively simple parables, is subtle and invites a close reading rather than a cursory glance. Moreover, Newman's sermon on the subject takes seriously that this Lucan 'pronouncement story' is preserved in Luke's Gospel not primarily for historical but for catechetical reasons: so that subsequent readers might embrace the 'better part' in their own Christian lives.

Catholic Sermons: Our Lady in the Gospel

Some of the earliest examples of Newman's preaching after becoming a Roman Catholic are found in a series of parish sermons preached at St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham in the Spring of 1848, soon after his return from Rome. The last of this series, preached on the 26th March, the Third Sunday of Lent, takes Luke 11:27-28 as its starting-point to examine the relationship between Christ and his mother in the gospel. This pericope, taken by Newman from the Douai translation, presents a dialogue between Jesus and a bystander:

And it came to pass, as he spoke these things, a certain woman from the crowd, lifting up her voice, said to him: Blessed is the womb that bore thee and the paps that gave thee suck. But he said: Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it.

Newman explains his particular interest in these words for the sake of his Birmingham congregation:

Now these words of our Lord require notice, if it were only for this reason, because there are many persons nowadays who think they are said in depreciation of the glory and blessedness of the Most Holy Virgin Mary ...¹⁹

Gone is some of the Tractarian reserve and the concern for using biblical language of the Anglican sermons. Our Lady is 'the first of creatures and the Queen of all Saints', 'the Most Holy Mother of God'. But the same patristic concern remains, although lacking the extensive allegorisation of some of Newman's later Catholic preaching. It is a very different appeal

¹⁹ J.H. Newman, *Catholic Sermons of Cardinal Newman* (London: Burns and Oates, 1957), p. 92.

to the Fathers, for example, than in his sermon outline on Luke's story of the widow of Naim's son (Lk 7:11-16), according to which the mother is the Church, and her dead son a Christian who has 'fallen away and is dead to sin':²⁰ It also reflects a desire to locate the saying about 'the womb that bore Thee' in the wider context of the Lucan narrative. Newman's first tack, therefore, is to produce patristic witnesses from Augustine to Chrysostom in support of an alternative and more natural interpretation, namely that 'our Lady was more blessed in doing God's will than in being His Mother'.

Secondly, Newman urges the congregation to remember Luke's narrative of the Annunciation to Mary, from which narrative 'the holy Fathers have ever gathered the exact obedience and the sinlessness of the Blessed Virgin' (p. 96). In her response to Gabriel, Mary displays four graces – humility, faith, obedience and purity – which are preparatory conditions for her becoming God's mother. 'Thus it is common to say that she conceived Christ in mind before she conceived Him in body, meaning that the blessedness of faith and obedience preceded the blessedness of being a Virgin Mother' (p. 97). But Newman's close reading of Luke 1 goes even further, to show how Mary expresses a preference for that 'greater blessedness' of hearing God's word and keeping it:

For when the Angel announced to her that she was destined to have that blessedness which Jewish women had age after age looked out for, to be the Mother of the expected Christ, she did not seize the news, as another would, but she waited. She waited till she could be told it was consistent with her virgin state (p. 97).

The tradition of Our Lady's vow of virginity lies in the background here. However, the main point of Newman's discussion is that this passage needs to be read in the light of Luke's portrayal of Mary in his infancy narrative. Leaving aside some of the mariological details, it is a reading which would not be out of place in a modern commentary on Luke which showed sensitivity to the wider Lucan narrative. Judith Lieu, for example, comments thus:

Jesus does not necessarily deny his mother any place ...; but more important than any physical bond with Jesus is response to him as the one who speaks *the word of God*. The same point was made in 8. 19-21 ..., but here it recalls Elizabeth's blessing of

²⁰ Tolhurst (ed.), *Sermon Notes* pp. 131-133.

Mary in 1.42, 45: it was Mary's belief in God's promise and not her physical bearing of Jesus which would ensure that 'all generations' would count her 'blessed' (1.48).²¹

Concluding Reflections

There remain significant differences between John Henry Newman's approach to Luke and that of more recent critical scholarship. To give just one example: although aware of distinctive characteristics of the Lucan record, he does not compartmentalise Luke's account from parallels in other gospels, in the manner of modern redaction or narrative critics. But there are features of Newman's preaching of Luke worthy of reiteration. The first is his recognition, already expressed in his sermon-lecture for St Luke's Day, that Luke deliberately eschews autobiographical comments in order to focus his readers' attention not on himself but on Christ. Christ is the true subject matter of the Third Gospel, and therefore the true subject matter of Luke's interpreters. This is interwoven with Newman's further acknowledge of the rich and dramatic store of distinctly Lucan stories, which have fired the Christian imagination from the beginning.

Second, in his approach to the biblical text, Newman's starting-point is not a 'hermeneutic of suspicion' but a 'hermeneutics of generosity'. Whatever else one might do to the text in the context of the study, in the pulpit the preacher's task is to sit with the text as vehicle of divine revelation, in order that both preacher and congregation might gain 'some benefit from the text'. Newman's overarching desire, both in his Anglican Parochial Sermons and in those of his Roman Catholic period, is to lead his hearers into holiness. This will require a patient, close, attentive reading of the text, all the more obvious in the case of Luke's Gospel, in all its subtle complexity.

Third, some of Newman's exegetical strategies are surprisingly contemporary. We have already noted in his St Chad's sermon on Our Lady two features which are receiving greater prominence in contemporary biblical scholarship. One is a rediscovery: that of patristic exegesis, a symptom of the wider scholarly interest in the reception history of biblical texts. The second is an acknowledgement – reiterated in the recent trend towards holistic readings – that the whole sheds light on the parts, that Luke's wider story is necessary for sensitive reading of individual pericopes.

²¹ J. Lieu, *The Gospel of Luke* (Epworth Commentaries; Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1997), p. 94.

Finally, there is something essentially Lucan about the spirituality of Newman's sermons, with their repetitive, insistent character, their invitation to respond to the indwelling Spirit in the setbacks of daily life, 'little by little', 'day by day' along the journey of life (for this emphasis on the 'daily' following of Christ, see Lk 9:23; 11:3). Moreover, we have already noted Avery Dulles' identification of three key themes in the *Parochial and Plain Sermons* – repentance, conversion, and obedience. What neither Dulles nor Newman make explicit, however, is that these are essentially Lucan themes. Obedience to the word of God is a motif permeating the gospel from Mary's *fiat* to the angel Gabriel onwards. The theme of conversion, of turning back, is manifested in a host of Lucan characters, from Zacchaeus of Jericho through the crowd at the crucifixion to Paul of Tarsus. But it is repentance, interwoven with forgiveness of sins, which is especially writ large in Luke's Gospel. Luke's particular insight is that the coming of Christ makes possible repentance, *metanoia*, through the generous divine offer of forgiveness of sins. Christ came not 'to call the righteous but sinners to repentance' (Lk 5:32, the last two words being Lucan redaction); the woman who bursts into the house of Simon the Pharisee loves much, because she has experienced an abundance of forgiveness (Lk 7:36-50); finally, the parting words of the risen Lord to his disciples are that 'repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem' (Lk 24:47).