

**REIMAGINING THE BIRTH OF THE MESSIAH  
AND HIS FORERUNNER IN LUKE'S GOSPEL:  
A SOCIORHETORICAL INTERPRETATION**

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## Declaration of authorship

I, David Christopher Smit, student number SMTDAV023, declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own in concept and execution. It has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

Title of thesis: *Reimagining the birth of the Messiah and his forerunner in Luke's Gospel: A sociorhetorical interpretation*

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. No part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. None of this work has been published before submission.

Signed by candidate

Signed: .....

Date: 31 November 2019

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## **Abstract**

This thesis investigates Luke's portrayal of the subordination of John, the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, to Jesus the Messiah in Luke 1–2. A detailed analysis of the opening-middle-closing textures of the Lukan text brings to the fore a clear structural juxtaposing and interweaving of the birth and infancy narratives of John and Jesus. The exercise provides the organising framework for the thesis. An in-depth sociorhetorical interpretation of these texts is then undertaken. The rhetoric and rhetology of the infancy narrative of John are first explored in detail, beginning with the annunciation to Zechariah in 1:5–25, continuing with the account of his birth in 1:57–66, and closing with Zechariah's resultant doxology in 1:67–80. A similar analysis is then undertaken of the infancy narrative of Jesus, beginning with the annunciation to Mary in Luke 1:26–38, continuing with the account of his birth and the angelic doxology and shepherds' tribute in 2:1–21, and closing with his presentation at the temple in 2:22–40. This closing text portion is identified as the closing texture of Luke's juxtaposing and weaving together of the two birth and infancy narratives. The process incorporates an analysis of the ideological texture, which emerges in Luke's development of these two narratives. The ideological texture manifests primarily in the emergence of an asymmetrical honour-power relationship between John and Jesus. A range of rhetorical strategies are identified as used by Luke to enhance the ideological texture, which in turn emphasises the surpassing honour and power of Jesus over and against that of John, his forerunner. My thesis makes a contribution to Lukan research by clarifying Luke's emergent ideological texture in the rhetoric of his two birth and infancy narratives. The use of the sociorhetorical interpretive analytic provides a thick description of the rhetoric of these two narratives, while engaging in conversation with cultural and scribal intertexture from the Jewish Scriptures and Second Temple Judaism. The dialogical nature of sociorhetorical interpretation enables a multidimensional interpretation of the texts.

# List of abbreviations and symbols

## Dead Sea Scrolls

1QM	<i>War Scroll</i>
1QS	<i>Rule of the Community</i>
4Q246	(4Qpseudo-dan <sup>e</sup> ) 4QAramaic Apocalypse / <i>Son of God Text</i>
4Q259	(4QS <sup>e</sup> ) <i>Community Rule</i> , fragment e
4Q285	<i>The Pierced Messiah Text</i> (a <i>War of the Messiah</i> fragment)
CD	Cairo Genizah <i>Damascus Document</i> (MS A, cols. 1–18; MS B, cols. 19–20)
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls

## Jewish Pseudepigrapha

<i>1 En.</i>	<i>1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch</i>
<i>4 Ezra</i>	<i>4 Ezra</i> (chapters 3–14 of <i>Ezra</i> )
<i>Watchers</i>	<i>Book of the Watchers</i> ( <i>1 En.</i> 1–36)
<i>Similitudes</i>	<i>Similitudes of Enoch</i> ( <i>1 En.</i> 37–71)/ <i>The Book of Parables of Enoch</i>

## Apocrypha

1 Macc	1 Maccabees
Jdt	Judith
Sir	Sirach/Ecclesiasticus
Tob	Tobit
Wis	Wisdom of Solomon

## Other ancient authors, early Jewish and early Christian witnesses and writings

<i>A.J.</i>	Josephus' <i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
<i>Ars. Rhet.</i>	Aristotle's <i>The art of rhetoric</i> (translated by W. Rhys Roberts)
<i>Her.</i>	Philo's <i>Quis rerum divinarum heres sit</i>
<i>Vita</i>	Josephus' <i>The Life</i>
<i>Prog.</i>	<i>Progymnasmata</i> (Preliminary exercises)
Rhet. Her.	Hermogenes' <i>Progymnasmata</i>
Ps.-Hermogenes	Pseudo-Hermogenes
<i>B.J.</i>	Josephus' <i>The wars of the Jews or history of the destruction of Jerusalem</i>
<i>Spec.</i>	Philo's <i>De specialibus legibus</i>

### **Books of the Jewish Scriptures**

Gen	Genesis
Exod	Exodus
Lev	Leviticus
Num	Numbers
Deut	Deuteronomy
Judg	Judges
1 Sam	1 Samuel
2 Sam	2 Samuel
1 Kgs	1 Kings
1 Chr	1 Chronicles
2 Chr	2 Chronicles
Neh	Nehemiah
Ps(s)	Psalms
Eccl	Ecclesiastes
Isa	Isaiah
Jer	Jeremiah
Ezek	Ezekiel
Dan	Daniel
Zech	Zechariah
Mal	Malachi

### **Books of the New Testament**

Matt	Matthew
1 Pet	1 Peter
2 Pet	2 Peter

### **Modern publications (Abbreviations of journals, series, symbols and publications)**

AB	<i>Anchor Bible</i>
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt</i>
AUSS	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
ASSR	Archives de sciences sociales des religions
BDAG	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (second English edition, revised by F. Wilbur)

Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker from Walter Bauer's fifth edition:  
Bauer–Danker–Arndt–Gingrich)

BDB	<i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Brown-Driver-Briggs)</i>
BECNT	<i>Baker Evangelical Commentary on the New Testament</i>
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
BibInt	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BR	<i>Biblical Research</i>
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BZNW	<i>Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
EKK	<i>Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament</i>
EvQ	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
HvTSt	<i>HTS Theologese Studies/Theological Studies</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JRH	<i>Journal of Religious History</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series</i>
JOS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
Neot	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NIGTC	<i>New International Greek Testament Commentary</i>
NICNT	<i>The New International Commentary on the New Testament</i>
NovTSup	<i>Suplements to Novum Testamentum</i>
NRSV	<i>New Revised Standard Version</i>
NT	<i>New Testament</i>
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NTTS	<i>New Testament Tools and Studies</i>
OBT	<i>Overtures to Biblical Theology</i>
OTP	<i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> (edited by J. H. Charlesworth)
PTSDSSP	<i>Princeton Theological Seminary Dead Sea Scrolls Project</i>
RB	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
RQ	<i>Revue de Qumrân</i>
RRA	<i>Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity</i>
SBL	<i>Society of Biblical Literature</i>

SBLDS	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series</i>
SBLEJL	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Early Judaism and its Literature</i>
SBLSymS	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series</i>
SDSSRL	<i>Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and related literature</i>
SHAW	<i>Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften</i>
SNTS	<i>Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas</i>
SNTSMS	<i>Society of New Testament Monograph Series</i>
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
TJ	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
WBC	<i>Word Biblical Commentary</i>
WGRW	<i>Writings from the Greco-Roman World</i>
WGRWSup	<i>Writings from the Greco-Roman World Supplement Series</i>
WUNT	<i>Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament</i>

### **General**

GNT	Greek New Testament (Nestle-Aland 28 <sup>th</sup> edition)
HB	Hebrew Bible (Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia)
KMB	Königliche Museen zu Berlin
ICM	Idealised Cognitive Model
LXX	Septuagint (Alfred Rahlfs 1935 critical edition, revised by Robert Hanhart in 2006)
MT	Masoretic text
SRI	Sociorhetorical interpretation

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## Prologue

As a pastor, I have the privilege and responsibility of preaching from the Scriptures of the New Testament and Hebrew Bible on a regular basis. Early in my ministry, my reading in the field of New Testament studies, along with Greek and Hebrew language study, inspired in me an interest in the Jewishness of Jesus and in the socio-cultural world of Second Temple Judaism. This led to a broader interest in ancient Mediterranean culture, the social context in which the New Testament was written. I found that knowing something of the relevant ancient languages and the socio-cultural context of the New Testament world stimulated my interest in the New Testament texts themselves.

When afforded the opportunity for further study at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1998–99, I was eager to capitalise on the opportunity for exposure to the work and teaching of specialists in Judaica, early Judaism and early Christianity. I was fortunate to be able to take courses with Martha Himmelfarb and Peter Schäfer at Princeton University, and with Donald Juel and James Charlesworth at the seminary. The exposure to the theology and literature of Qumran, the in-depth study of the Gospel of Luke, and an inspiring class and seminar on Judaism in the Graeco-Roman period, opened my eyes to the possibility of more focussed research on aspects of the Gospel of Luke in the context of its socio-cultural and ideological world.

Initially my focus was primarily historical. I sought to acquire the necessary skills for a more responsible reconstruction of the events that gave birth to the New Testament, and more meaningful descriptions of the society and communities that provided the conceptual world and thought patterns reflected in Luke's writings. This did not initially include an interest in narrative and rhetorical studies. However, the more I read about rhetorical and narrative analysis and the important role of social reality in the social construction of perceived meaning and communication, the more clearly did I realise that my primary access to the world of the birth of Christianity is through canonical and non-canonical texts. Such texts by their very nature use rhetoric to communicate. This realisation led to a clearer understanding and greater appreciation for rhetorical analysis. Fortunately, at the time, I was advised to consider the range of heuristic analytics developed by Vernon Robbins, which he has called *sociorhetorical interpretation*. Here I discovered an interpretive strategy that recognises texts as multi-layered artefacts. Sociorhetorical interpretation understands texts to intersect with other texts, and to intersect with the milieu that provides the social-cultural and historical context for authorship. I was enriched by the opportunity to include the analysis of ideological texture in my thesis, and challenged by the need to recognise my

own prejudices and biases in that we as readers are also shaped by our own social contexts. These aspects, in turn, intersect with the social-culture expressed in the world of the text. As a New Testament student and a pastoral leader of a faith community, all these aspects are important for me in view of the potential insights into the meaning and message of the New Testament. Many texts from the non-canonical literature of early Judaism are now also readily accessible as a result of the publication of the corpus of the *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* and the literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls. These insights have led me to undertake the study described here.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

The opening two chapters of the Gospel of Luke provide a textured account of the events around the birth of Jesus. The Gospels of Mark and John do not begin with birth and infancy narratives and, although the Gospel of Matthew includes an account of the birth of Jesus, only Luke tells of the births of both John the Baptist, son of Elizabeth and Zechariah,<sup>1</sup> and Jesus, son of Mary. Luke's account includes some bold claims about the birth of Jesus as God's Messiah. In chapter 2, for example, the angel of the Lord declares to shepherds in a field that he brings the good news that a σωτήρ has been born ἐν πόλει Δαυίδ, "who is χριστὸς κύριος."<sup>2</sup> Attempts to understand Luke's portrayal of the life and death of Jesus and the life and work of the early Christians described in the Acts of the Apostles will benefit from a careful consideration of the way in which aspects of Luke's infancy narratives introduce key elements of his Christology. Walter Brueggemann (2011, 10–12) has described biblical texts as "thick, layered and conflicted", and this is certainly a fitting description of Luke's textured description of events around the birth of the Messiah Jesus. This diversity of texture invites analysis.

### 1.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BIRTH AND INFANCY NARRATIVES FOR LUKE

As will become clear in my analysis, Luke's account is firmly anchored in the faith and culture of early Judaism. He has achieved this "rootedness" by means of a careful use of titles, concepts, words and phrases with close connections to texts from the Jewish Scriptures and other non-canonical early Jewish writings. Chapters 1 and 2 of Luke's Gospel also evidence a close connection with other religious, social and cultural practices and values of the ancient Mediterranean world. These connections between the world of the text and the world of the real author and readers, and between Luke's text and other texts, are the source of *intertexture*. This is a term adopted by sociorhetorical interpretation (SRI)

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<sup>1</sup> In my thesis I refer to John, the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, later called "the Baptist", simply as "John". When I refer to John's Gospel, I specify that fact.

<sup>2</sup> NT Greek quotations in my thesis are taken from the Nestle-Aland 28<sup>th</sup> edition of the Greek New Testament. English quotations from the NT are taken from the Anglicised edition of the NRSV, (1995), Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

to refer to oral-scribal, social-cultural, and historical intertexture.<sup>3</sup> The identification of such intertexture informs our understanding of Luke's conceptualisation of Jesus as the Messiah.

Textual and cultural connections between Luke's Gospel and the Jewish Scriptures, the literature of early Judaism, including the pseudepigraphical writings abound. However, the apocalyptic expectation for the coming of a warrior-like royal messiah in some of these pseudepigraphic texts suggests that Luke has configured messiahship differently from these apocalyptic texts. His understanding of messiahship appears to have been shaped by eyewitness memories of Jesus.<sup>4</sup> As will become evident in chapters 3 and 4 below, my analysis reveals areas of development in the narrative in which the royal references to Jesus are brought to a climax with the angel's specific reference to Jesus as the Messiah in Luke 2:11, and Simeon's reference to him as the Lord's Messiah in 1:26. Although beyond the scope of this study, Don Juell (1988, 89–117) has drawn attention to the prominence of a messianic interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures used to portray the crucifixion of Jesus as the death of God's Messiah in the closing chapters of Luke's Gospel. This observation suggests that Luke's birth and infancy narratives in chapters 1 and 2, and his passion narrative in chapters 22–24, serve as a pair of bookends, providing a powerful messianic framing for the Gospel. I am focussing my analysis on the first of these two bookends.<sup>5</sup> This framing process is evident in the way in which Luke "connects the infancy narrative (Lk 1–2) with the resurrection narrative (Lk 24)" (Zwiep, 1997, 29–30). Examples of such connections are evident in parallels, repetitions, and conceptual echoes, including the following: (1) Zechariah's dumbness in 1:20–23, the "righteous and devout" Simeon speaking a blessing over the infant Jesus and his parents in 2:34–35, and Zechariah's prophetic doxology in 1:68–79, beginning with a blessing, are all echoed again later in Luke's Gospel in 24:50–51, with Jesus speaking a blessing over his gathered disciples prior to his ascension; (2) the trips to Jerusalem undertaken by the infant Jesus and boy Jesus in Luke 2:22 and 42, and by his parents returning to the temple to search for their missing son in v. 45, are echoed in the journeys to Jerusalem undertaken by disciples of Jesus in 24:33,

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<sup>3</sup> SRI as a range of interpretive analytics is explained in detail in chapter 2.

<sup>4</sup> The LXX translated the Hebrew *המשיח* with the Greek *ὁ χριστός*. The word *χριστός* is also used in the NT to refer to Jesus as the divinely anointed redeemer figure that had come to be expected in some expressions of Second Temple Judaism.

<sup>5</sup> For ease of reference, I will consistently use "infancy narratives" to refer generally to the narratives of the birth of John and Jesus in Luke 1:5–2:40. When referring to the birth of either John or Jesus, I am able more specifically to refer to the "birth of John", "birth of Jesus" or "birth and infancy of Jesus".

52; and (3) God's miraculous role in Jesus' birth, emphasised by the role played by angels (1:11, 26; 2:13), is echoed again in his resurrection in Luke 24. In this way, key characters in Luke's narrative return to Jerusalem in the closing sections of his gospel, and God acts in miraculous ways in both his birth and his death and resurrection. The resulting rhetorical texture achieves a framing of the body of Luke's Gospel and contributes to the progressive texture of the plot that eventually leads to its denouement (Zwiep, 1997, 29–30). In this way, Luke draws attention to the importance of Jerusalem in his account and, by implication, the progressive texture highlights the fulfilment of Israel's messianic hopes, dawned in the birth of Jesus. These observations suggest the potential value of a detailed analysis of the rhetorical textures of Luke's infancy narratives.

## **1.2 THE UNIQUENESS OF LUKE'S ACCOUNTS OF THE BIRTH OF JOHN AND JESUS**

Following on from the prologue in Luke 1:1–4, Luke as omniscient observer and third person narrator provides the background to John's later public ministry in the infancy narratives. The four-source Synoptic Gospel hypothesis identifies the Gospel of Mark as Luke's primary literary resource (see Streeter, 1924). Mark opens his gospel in 1:1–8 with an account of John's public ministry and self-subordination to Jesus. Luke, on the other hand, incorporates Mark's idea of John's self-subordination to Jesus by making it the dominant idea in his infancy narratives. He begins by recounting the births of John and of Jesus, and by incorporating a variety of rhetorical textures and conceptual strands of tradition into his infancy narratives. Why has Luke gone to all this unique effort? My thesis suggests the possibility of rivalry between the disciples of John and the disciples of Jesus at the time of Luke's writing, and that Luke, like other gospel writers, sets about clarifying that John is subordinate to Jesus. If Robert Webb (1991) is correct in his suggestion that Jesus "could even be understood to be competing with John as a rival", then any such rivalry between the disciples of John and Jesus may date back to the actual relationship between John and Jesus. See, however, the views of Walter Wink (1968, 84–86, 94–95), who argues that Luke has in fact "radically eliminated any suggestion of real rivalry". In his view, Luke "*knew of the existence of a Baptist community by hearsay alone* and was not obligated to attach to it any real significance." He suggests that any such rivalry between John and Jesus be rather located in the later portrayal of their relationship by John the Evangelist. In the Gospel of John, Jesus is not actually baptized by John as portrayed by Luke (3:21), and John is portrayed as the first Jesus-follower in his announcement of the sacrificial death of Jesus: "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) Also, in John 4 Jesus is described as imitating John as a follower.

In my own view, the positing of the existence of (a) rival group(s) of disciples of John at the time of Luke's writing who needed to be appeased in some way, offers a plausible explanation for the extraordinary lengths Luke goes to in his birth narratives to honour John at his priestly birth. The possibility of rivalry between Jesus and John after of they parted ways following the baptism of Jesus would help to explain the origins of any such conflict between their respective disciples. This understanding would not be inconsistent with the implications of the reference in Acts 19:1–7 to disciples of John at Ephesus finding out at a late stage about baptism in the name of Jesus. The Acts reference confirms that John's disciples, at the very least, were still active during the early Christian period (Munck, 1967, 187–188).<sup>6</sup>

In his infancy narratives, Luke develops layers of rhetography and rhetology as he juxtaposes and weaves together accounts of the births of John and Jesus. His strategy progressively emphasises an asymmetrical power relationship between the figures. In the context of antiquity, honour is a key determinant of social power, and the ascription of honour to John and Jesus plays a significant role in Luke's infancy narratives in the determining factor in establishing the superiority of Jesus to John. This step contributes in important ways to Luke's rhetorical strategy for the proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah.<sup>7</sup>

### **1.3 THE SOCIAL LOCATION OF IMPLIED AUTHOR AND IMPLIED AUDIENCE**

One aspect that deserves consideration by way of introduction, is the question of the social location of the implied author and implied readers of Luke's Gospel. The issue comes to the fore already as one begins to read the opening verses of the gospel. Luke's respectful address to Theophilus in the prologue to Luke's Gospel in 1:1–4 suggests the existence of an asymmetrical power relationship between him and his addressee, Theophilus. Richard L. Rohrbaugh (2000, 215–216) has argued that Luke is writing for someone above himself in social location. Theophilus appears to be a benefactor to Luke, that is, the text suggests a

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<sup>6</sup> Lidzbarski (1925, v–xvii) and Reitzenstein (1919, 37–38) have suggested that a proto-Mandaeen text of the small Mandaean religious community in Iraq had influenced John's disciples before the time of Jesus (see the discussion in Dodd, 1968, 115–130). This possibility would support the view that the Mandaeans represent a continuation of the community of John's disciples. However, it is questionable whether the early origins of traditions in their literature in fact link the Mandaeans to John the Baptist.

<sup>7</sup> By "asymmetrical power relationship" I refer to a relationship between two persons or parties that are not equal in terms of social or economic power (see Thompson, 1984, 130, and my discussion of the relationship between ideology and power in chapter 2).

patron-client relationship between the author and the reader. Theophilus may in some way have commissioned the writing of Luke-Acts. The prologue reflects a subordination of Luke to Theophilus that in some ways parallels the subordinate relationship of John to Jesus as it emerges in the progressive texture of the birth narratives. This ideological texture pre-empted the prominent strand of ideological texture that, as I will seek to show, runs through the birth narratives.

Loveday Alexander (1986, 1993, 1999) has comprehensively compared the prefaces of Luke-Acts and other Greek writings of the period.<sup>8</sup> In her work, she identifies a remarkable similarity between the style of Luke's preface and the dedications to patrons found in technical or professional writings of the time, a genre she calls "the scientific tradition".<sup>9</sup> On the basis of these findings, Alexander (1986, 60) locates Luke's writings in the "middlebrow" literature of the first century.<sup>10</sup> One might surmise then that Luke is not too far socially removed from poorer members of society to be able to relate to their context. At the same time, as a literate person, he is not too far removed from people of influence and power to be able to communicate with them.

Robbins (1991b) has suggested a model that proves helpful in identifying the social location of the discourse in Luke's text. The model draws a three-way correlation between the rhetorical strategies of the implied author/reader, the narrator/narratee, and the characters/audience of the text (Robbins, 1991b, 309–312).<sup>11</sup> A range of nine basic arenas of social systems are suggested, namely, "previous events, natural environment and resources, population structure, technology, socialization and personality, culture, foreign affairs, belief systems and ideologies, and the political-military-legal system" (Robbins, 1991b, 309, see also Elliott 1986, 14 and Carney 1975, 246). Robbins (1991b, 331) locates the thought of the implied author among the activities of empowered adult Jews and Romans living in Mediterranean cities and villages. In his view, the arena of socialisation

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<sup>8</sup> Robbins (1999) and Schmidt (1999) have also undertaken valuable analyses of Luke's rhetoric in his preface in the light of Hellenistic historiography.

<sup>9</sup> Alexander (1986, 57, note 31) uses the term "scientific" in a sense closer to the German "wissenschaftlich", which includes several possible meanings, including "academic", "technical", "specialist" and "professional".

<sup>10</sup> In this regard, Alexander's work provides an independent verification of the earlier findings of Lars Rydbeck (1967).

<sup>11</sup> See the development of the narrative-communication model by Chatman (1978), and the modification of this model by Staley (1988, 21–49).

and personality suggests an “upward-looking use of technology” in respect of the implied attitude to politically empowered Roman officials, while Jewish officials seem to be treated as people of equal social status and rank.

The implied author reflects an intimate knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures, and reveals a primary culture of “written literature and cultivated speech” (Robbins, 1991b, 332). Luke’s text at times calls for the distribution of wealth among the poor while not going so far as to argue for the poor to be permitted to become landowners and householders. This points to a social location in “cities and villages, not out in the countryside” (Robbins, 1991b, 332). Robbins (1991b, 332) points out that the diverse population among the characters of Luke’s text includes political-military-legal personnel, suggesting that he locates himself within the “heterogeneous population of the Roman Empire”.

The discourse vigorously confronts Jewish people even though the implication of the narrative is that the heritage of the implied author lies within Judaism. The narrative reflects polite but straightforward communication with Roman officials, exhibiting a boldness of approach. At the same time, the tone of the narrative implies readers who are willing to submit to socially dominant individuals in the Roman Empire. For example, political-military-legal characters in Luke-Acts at times protect Christians and at other times imprison them (Robbins, 1991b, 332). The implied author and audience suggest “a Jewish sphere of society using the Greek language, the lingua franca of the Mediterranean world” (Robbins, 1991b, 332). The text implies an author who manifests the knowledge of Jewish tradition of a Jewish insider, while at the same time exhibiting a familiarity with Hellenistic culture. Robbins’s assessment takes account of the complexity of the social location of the implied author and audience of Luke-Acts and sets the tone for the analysis undertaken in my thesis. Luke appears to engage in distinctively Christian theological argumentation for Jesus’ messiahship. However, the close cultural intertexture between Luke’s infancy narratives and the literature of early Judaism suggests that they are written from the perspective of a Jewish Christian, and that the implied author is addressing fellow-members of the Jesus movement. These insights contribute particularly to my interpretation of the social and cultural texture and ideological texture of Luke’s infancy narratives.

## **1.4 MY THESIS**

### **1.4.1 Formulation of thesis statement**

My preliminary analysis of the opening-middle-closing texture of Luke's infancy narratives reveals that he has structured his birth accounts in a sequence of narrative units and sub-units. He uses the sequencing of the units to weave together and to juxtapose his accounts of the birth of John and of Jesus. Jesus emerges from these accounts as the dominant figure and Luke's account of the life, ministry, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus is the central message of the rest of his gospel. This leads to my hypothesis that, by setting up an asymmetrical power relationship between John and Jesus in the two infancy narratives, Luke incorporates a thread of ideological texture into the fabric of his discourse that runs through the length of these narratives. The theological importance of Jesus becomes clear in the rest of Luke's Gospel. My central argument is that Luke uses progressive texture to develop the eventual ascription of greater honour to Jesus than to John. He hereby sets up a developing trajectory that eventually highlights an unequal honour-power relationship between them, thus manifesting ideological texture by means of which he emphasises the theological importance of the birth of Jesus as God's Messiah.

My analysis will have to take account of the fact that Luke initially builds up John's honour. He is the son of priests, a prophet called by God, a priest-prophet in the tradition of Jeremiah in the Jewish Scriptures and perhaps other HB prophets. Even though, as becomes clear, he is not the Messiah, he is nonetheless highly honoured in the narrative of his annunciation and birth.

Although, as progressively becomes clearer in the birth and infancy narratives, John is the forerunner to Jesus, this relationship remains rather opaque until Luke 3. The reference to John making ready a people prepared for the Lord (1:17), and to John being called the prophet of the Most High, going before the Lord to prepare his ways (1:76), could be interpreted as stating that John is inferior to God, as the referent of "Lord" (and not the Messiah). The subordination of John to Jesus is also implied in Elizabeth's subordination of herself to Mary in 1:43, but it is only finally made explicit in 3:16. Why would Luke obscure and defer the explicit statement of John's forerunner status if his rhetorical aim is to make John's subordination clearer to his audience? No known ancient biography opens by describing the conception of a figure who is then subordinated to its main character as is John to Jesus. This is a strange rhetorical move that will need to be addressed in my thesis. On the hand this rhetorical move makes sense in a situation where Luke is writing to people

who are already followers of Jesus and, thus, in a high-context society (Hall, 1989), where the subordination of John to Jesus is assumed from the outset. Luke can assume that the readers identify Jesus as the Lord before they even begin reading the Gospel, making it unnecessary for Luke to state these facts explicitly.

The conjectured situation of the need to appease and to win over disciples of John in the world of the real author provides a more likely rationale for Luke's ideological motivation for the honouring of John in the opening sections, later shifting to a more overt subordination of John to Jesus. At the very least it seems that Luke may have known people who had honoured and revered John. Luke's narrative shows a healthy degree of respect for John but links his life purpose to Jesus. This would also explain the impression given by Luke's ideological texture that he is addressing element of rivalry between followers of John and Jesus. Luke's birth narratives later become a primary source for this reinterpretation of John as one who prepared the way for Jesus and was subordinate to him.

This ideological texture thus addresses specific historical intertexture, while at the same time laying the foundation for the central storyline of his gospel, that is, the proclamation of Jesus as God's Saviour-Messiah. Luke anchors the birth of Jesus within Jewish cultural heritage, predominantly through the use of prophetic discourse and the development of progressive texture. The analysis of ideological texture in Luke's rhetoric has largely been neglected in Lukan studies and it is in respect of this aspect of SRI that my thesis can be located and seeks to make a scholarly contribution.

What impact will my observations make on our understanding of other aspects of Luke's Gospel narrative, if any? This question is of particular importance in respect of Luke's application of Q material dealing with John and Jesus in Luke 3:7-9, 16b-17, and 7:18-35. Exploring Luke's rhetorical strategies in his presentation of John and Jesus in his infancy narratives is the central theme of my analysis in chapters 3 and 4. My thesis explores the development of Luke's storyline as it begins to take shape in his account of the events around the births of John and of Jesus. I investigate the sociorhetorical textures used to present the coming of Jesus as the fulfilment of the hopes of the Jewish Scriptures and apocalyptic literature of Second Temple Judaism. In chapters 3 and 4, I seek to demonstrate that Luke develops vivid rhetoric and rhetology in these two narratives, making each narrative accessible and believable to his readers. Luke develops his narrational argument to convince his readers of the authority and honour ascribed to both John and Jesus as he weaves together the two infancy narratives in juxtaposition. Luke's rhetoric manifests ideological texture in this regard.

### 1.4.2 Approach

I will argue that Luke employs rhetorical strategies to blend together various expressions of early Christian messianic discourse expressed using royal *topoi*, and that he does so in pursuit of his ideological and theological purposes. My thesis also explores the ways in which Luke capitalises on his juxtaposing and interweaving of his accounts of the two births to reinforce the superiority of Jesus over John. This analytical process calls for the use of an interpretive analytic capable of analysing the rhetorical arguments and narrational imagery developed by Luke to achieve his purposes.

Classical rhetorical analysis has identified three central modes of social discourse, namely judicial (used in the courtroom in dealing with judicial and forensic matters), deliberative (as encountered in the political assembly intended to persuade an audience), and civil rhetoric (as used in civil ceremonies that used epideictic or demonstrative language with the intention of giving wise advice and counsel for life) (Kennedy, 1984, 1999, 2003). However, Robbins (2008b, 86–88) has pointed to the limitations of classical rhetorical categories in terms of their usefulness for interpreting early Christian discourse. In chapter 2, I provide a motivation for the employment of SRI as a more suitable and appropriately rigorous approach, especially in terms of its understanding of rhetorical dialects.<sup>12</sup> SRI has enabled me to make close observations and arguments in respect of Luke's rhetoric and in terms of its function as comprehensible and meaningful communication within the context of the socio-cultural, ideological and sacred world of the implied author and audience.

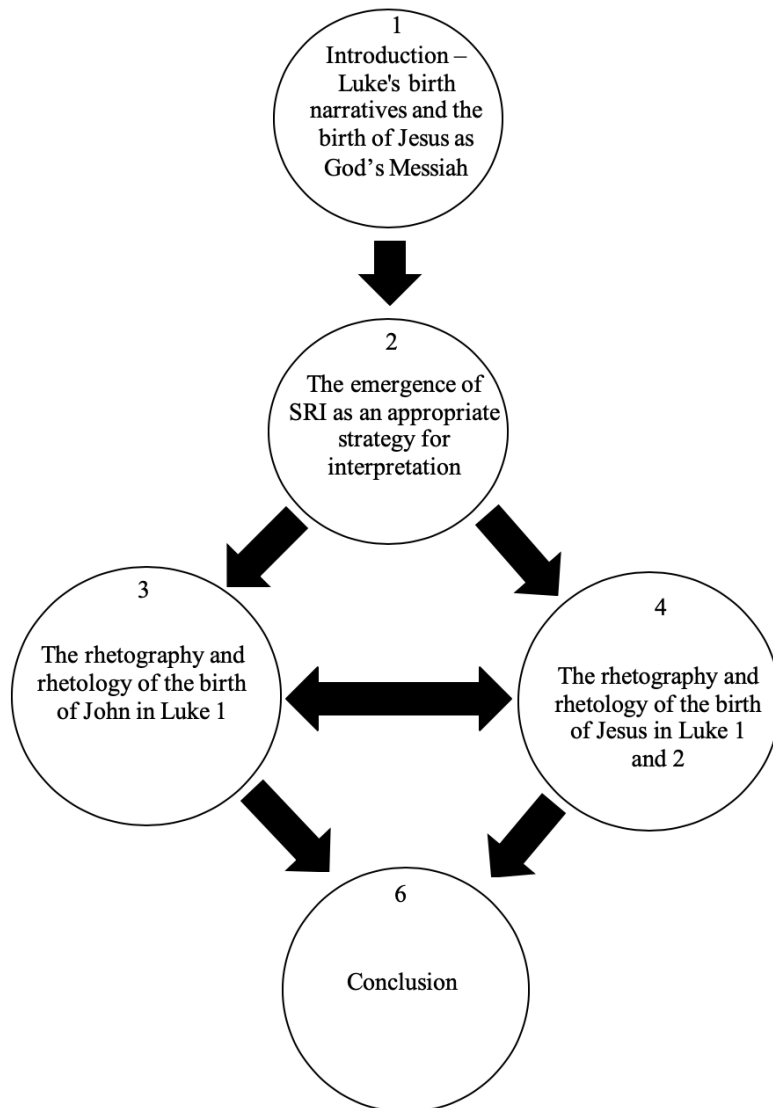
### 1.4.3 Overview of thesis

My thesis begins in chapter 2 with a brief overview of recent interpretations of Luke's infancy narratives that utilise a variety of methodological approaches, including historical criticism, redaction criticism, social-scientific criticism, narrative-analysis, postcolonial analysis and ideological criticism. This brief survey then leads to a consideration of SRI. I argue that SRI takes appropriate cognisance of the tapestry of rhetorical textures crafted by Luke. Furthermore, I argue that SRI is able to bring together in dialogue a range of different interpretive voices. Chapters 3 and 4 then provide an opportunity for the application of SRI in my analysis of the rhetography and rhetology of Luke's infancy narratives. The findings of

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<sup>12</sup> See Robbins (1996a, 1996b, 2009) for foundational SRI texts; and Robbins (2004a, 2010b) for valuable overviews of its development and approach.

the analysis provide a textured understanding of the means by which Luke lays the theological and ideological foundation for his greater Luke-Acts enterprise. The following figure represents the overall flow of my thesis.



**Figure 1: Diagrammatic overview of the thesis**

## **1.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

In my thesis I argue that Luke uses a range of rhetorical strategies to portray the subordination of John the prophet to Jesus the Messiah. In chapters 3 and 4 I use SRI to explore the nature and outcome of these strategies. In my analysis, the ideological texture begins to emerge as a key product of Luke's narration, especially evident as the narratives progress.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The emergence of SRI as interpretive strategy**

Luke's narratives of the birth of John and Jesus in Luke 1 and 2 introduce his account of the person and work of Jesus. As my analysis will demonstrate, the key theme of the royalty of Jesus as the Messiah is introduced in Luke 1 and 2. Recognising the importance of the infancy narratives in the interpretation of Luke's progressively clear portrayal of Jesus the Messiah is thus an underlying motivation for my thesis. My analysis of Luke's infancy narratives demonstrates that Luke's ideological aim to subordinate John to Jesus drives the choice of his rhetorical strategies in his birth and infancy narratives. In this chapter, I begin with a brief survey of relevant contemporary literature that brings to light the wide range of approaches and methodologies recently employed by Lukan scholars. It highlights the more recent trend to draw on the findings of historical-critical approaches while making literary, rhetorical, sociological and ideological criticism the major focus. The survey traces the emergence of SRI and presents a motivation for its suitability for my analysis. I close the chapter by undertaking a structural analysis of Luke 1:5–2:40, which reveals the importance of opening-middle-closing texture in the structure of Luke's infancy narratives. The analysis draws attention to Luke's detailed structural juxtaposing and interweaving of the two infancy narratives. These findings contribute to the organisation of my thesis.

#### **2.1 RECENT INTERPRETATIONS OF THE GOSPEL OF LUKE**

The work done by Hans Conzelmann (1954) on the gospel introduced a new era in Lukan studies. He worked with the gospel in its canonical form using an approach closely akin to the approach later known as redaction criticism. Unfortunately, Conzelmann chose to disregard Luke's infancy narratives in his discussion of the theology of Luke. In the rest of his gospel, Luke picks up on the key point that progressively emerges from his infancy narratives: Jesus is the royal Saviour Messiah and Lord of Israel.<sup>13</sup> During the twentieth century, Lukan researchers had by and large employed historical-critical-linguistic strategies. Versions of this approach persisted throughout the century and include late

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<sup>13</sup> See the arguments of Green (1997, 49–50) in respect of Luke laying the foundation for later themes in his gospel. See also the work of Minear (1966) and Oliver (1964), who already in the 1960s offered resistance to Conzelmann's decision to omit the infancy narratives.

twentieth century examples such as the commentary on the infancy narratives by Raymond E. Brown (1979), and commentaries on Luke by I. Howard Marshall (1978), Joseph Fitzmyer (1981) and John Nolland (1989). No discussion of historical-critical commentaries on Luke's infancy narratives would be complete without mention of the magisterial commentary on Luke's Gospel by François Bovon (1996, 2002). I concur with the view of Myles M. Bourke (1984, 582), with reference to Brown (1979) and Fitzmyer (1981), that neither of these authors suggested that historical-critical exegesis has the last word on historical realities in terms of the events described in Luke's narrative. To the contrary, Marshall (1978), Brown (1979), Fitzmyer (1981), Nolland (1989), and later Bovon (1996, 2002), all ventured far beyond a purely historical-critical analysis in their attempts to provide theological interpretations. Brown (1979, 8) in fact has gone so far as to contend that the infancy narratives encapsulate the core message of the Christian gospel. The weakness of the historical-critical approach lies in the observation that, no matter how succinct scholars may be in their attempts to reconstruct the historical reality of the world behind a text, it remains impossible to know for certain the actual intention of the author and what may have actually taken place. Nevertheless, the historical-critical and historical-theological exegesis expressed in these works has proved invaluable resource for the identification of the historical and textual data used by Luke to make the rhetorical arguments of his infancy narratives.

The hymns of Luke's infancy narratives have served as a catalyst for a shift in approach in recent years. The analysis of the *Magnificat* and the *Benedictus*, undertaken by Ulrike Mittmann-Richert (1996), alternated between a historical-critical analysis of the tradition history lying behind Luke's hymns, and a literary-critical analysis of their redactional function in Luke's overall gospel proclamation and theological system. Richard Dillon (2006) picks up on the analysis of these hymns, recognising their uniqueness as carefully crafted units, stylistically contrasted, along with the narratives into which they are embedded. He warns against treating them as intrusions to the flow of the story (Dillon, 2006, 457). He focuses his attention on the *Benedictus*, holding it to be a pre-Christian hymn. Thus, informed by the findings of historical-criticism, his exploration of the function of the hymn pushes through to a careful analysis of Luke's literary, editorial and theological purposes, positioned as it is at the climax of the account of John's birth. In similar fashion, the more recent analysis of Stephen Farris (2015 [1985]) provides a vital bridge between the older historical-critical approaches and the newer social and literary approaches to the

doxologies of Luke's infancy narratives.<sup>14</sup> He undertakes a historical-critical investigation into the origins of Luke's nativity hymns alongside an investigation into their function in their literary context. This approach frames his search for theological meaning.

Recent decades have witnessed important shifts in the approach of interpreters to the New Testament (NT). Conzelmann (1954) had already initiated a shift to a more literary approach. The historical-critical approach that had been so foundational to the work of the earlier authors has now been enhanced by the valuable social-scientific strategies employed by members of a movement that has become known as the Context Group, including Bruce J. Malina (1986, 2001 [1981], 2016b), Jerome H. Neyrey (2005, 2010), John H. Elliott (1996, 2005, 2008), Rohrbaugh (1995, 2000) and J. Pilch (2007; 2008). Building on social-scientific criticism in terms of the interest in the social world of ancient Mediterranean society, members of the Context Group have also turned their attention to expressions of social value and custom in the world of NT texts. Halvor Moxnes (1991a, 1991b, 2004 [1988]) and Philip F. Esler (1987, 1994, 2005) have also employed social scientific approaches in the analysis of the Gospel of Luke.

Since then a gradual shift to a dominant interest in the canonical NT text had begun to re-emerge as a focus in NT scholarship, evident, for example, in the literary approach of Tannehill (1986). Nolland's commentary on Luke, although still historical-critical in emphasis, included literary analytical perspectives in his considerations. Luke Timothy Johnson (1991) and Joel B. Green (1994, 1997) both self-consciously used narrative analysis in their studies on Luke's Gospel, and Mikeal C. Parsons (2015), while emphasising historical and theological aspects, offers helpful insight into literary perspectives. Mark Coleridge (1993) has sought to uncover Luke's Christology by means of a literary analysis of Luke's infancy narratives. Similarly, Green (1992, 1994, 1995, 1997) not only employed a narrative analytical approach, but also included the social sciences in his analysis. These approaches inspired interpreters to take the text of Luke's Gospel seriously in its canonical form. Darrell Bock (1994), in his commentary on the Gospel of Luke, brings together the best of several of the above approaches by integrating historical, sociological and theological approaches. These authors, informed by close analysis of the text, have all offered helpful insights into Luke's infancy narratives.

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<sup>14</sup> See also his 2001 article on the doxologies of Luke's infancy narratives.

Studies have increasingly employed strategies that draw on aspects of rhetorical criticism, intertextual analysis, and ideological criticism. Hans Dieter Betz (1975, 1979, 1995), Wilhelm Wuellner (1976, 1987, 1991a, 1991b), and George A. Kennedy (1984, 1999) initially led the way in this regard, applying classical rhetoric to the analysis of NT texts. The essays from the 1992 Heidelberg conference on rhetoric and the interpretation of the NT serve as prime examples of rhetorical studies entering mainstream NT interpretation in the early 1990s. Although classical rhetorical analysis has not been extensively applied to Luke 1 and 2, Ben Witherington III (2009, 44) has suggested that it is particularly relevant for the analysis of the speeches of Luke 1–2. The more recent socio-narrative analysis of the characters and the social worlds of Luke’s infancy narratives by Brightstar J. Syiemlieh (2005), and the narrative theological analysis of Luke’s Christology undertaken of C. Kavin Rowe (2006, see especially pp. 146–147), have been particularly helpful in their suggestions of socio-narrational-theological interpretations of Luke’s infancy narratives. Syiemlieh (2005, see especially, 5) has drawn attention to the fact that Luke’s narrative strategy is blended with a social strategy. His analysis thus draws on insights from both the social sciences and narrative criticism and, in my view, leads to more fruitful analysis than does the purely literary approach of Mark Coleridge (1993). Chang-Wook Jung (2004) has highlighted Luke’s Semitisms and Septuagintisms, attempting to determine whether such elements evidence Luke’s efforts to imitate the Hebrew Bible (HB), or if they rather point to the translation of a Semitic source. Although his detailed analysis stops short of a thorough investigation into the theological motivations lying behind any such imitation or translation, his considerations contribute to a better understanding of the function and role of oral-scribal intertexture. The analysis of echoes of the Jewish Scriptures in Luke’s writings undertaken by Kenneth Litwak (2005) also contributes to the understanding of the nature of oral-scribal intertexture in these texts. In contrast to critical approaches that atomise the text, Litwak takes Luke’s narrative seriously. He holds that the echoes of the HB and LXX evident in Luke’s writings are not merely aimed at a stylistic imitation but are rather intended to demonstrate continuity between the OT people of God and the NT church.

The Black Liberationist approach of Itumeleng Mosala (1989) is closely related to postcolonial criticism, which began to surface as an interpretive tool in the 1980s, in the wake of the influential publication on “orientalism” by Edward W. Said (1979). In the following decade, biblical scholars, mostly from the Two-Thirds World, began to apply Said’s insights to biblical interpretation. Postcolonial criticism uses a critical-ideological analysis of issues relating to the power of the Roman Empire, both as imperial political power and as concept (Punt, 2012). Postcolonial criticism is thus closely related to the approach used in my SRI

analysis of ideological texture – although its analytical strategy tends to idealise the concept of the Roman Empire. Also taking an ideologically critical approach in his socio-historical analysis of Luke’s infancy narratives, Richard Horsley (2006) highlights pitfalls and consequences inherent in the overconfident application of historical-critical approaches. He might well be advised to take a leaf out of Syiemlieh’s book by including in his analysis a consideration of literary analysis, taking the narrative context of the stories more seriously (see, for example, the emphasis of Syiemlieh, 2005, 8).

In a somewhat related vein, NT critics have begun to address issues of gender-power in texts and their interpretation. The first wave of feminist biblical interpretation began in the 19th century with the work of Frances Willard (1886), Anna Julia Cooper (1892) and Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1895, 1898). Feminist interpretive concerns received fresh impetus through a second wave of feminist biblical scholarship in the mid-1970s and early 1980s, through the editorial work of Letty Russell. Of particular note is her collection of essays addressing issues around non-sexist biblical interpretation (see Russell, 1985). Since then, Luke’s Gospel has begun to receive considerable attention and has become something of a rallying point in feminist criticism.<sup>15</sup> An anthology edited by Levine (2002) has provided a valuable collection of papers addressing Lukan scholarship from a feminist perspective. The diversity of articles in this publication supports Levine’s (2010, 157–164) view that the term “feminist” embraces a wide variety of approaches.

In closing, two recent research collections deserve mention. They demonstrate current directions and trends in the study of the infancy narratives. The first is a collection of essays on the nativity edited by Jeremy Corley (2009), which focusses on recent developments in the interpretation of the canonical infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke, with a Christian audience in view. It includes a review article on the state of research by Henry Wansbrough (2009, 4–22), a narrative reading of Luke’s infancy narratives by Ian Boxall (2009, 4–22), and a study on the prophetic voices of Elizabeth, Mary and Anna by Barbara Reid (2009, 37–46). Leonard Maluf (2009, 47–66) seeks to provide an explanation for what he deems to be the focus of the *Benedictus* on the hope of the Jewish Scriptures rather than on the arrival of a messianic age. The significance of the *κατάλυμα* of Luke 2:7 for the interpretation of Jesus’ journeys and the message of Luke-Acts, is also explored by Nicholas King (2009, 67–76). The second is a collection of essays edited by Claire Clivaz et al. (2011), which broadens the

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, the work of Jane Schaberg (1987), and her more recent commentary on Luke’s Gospel (Schaberg, 1992).

scope of the subject matter to include apocryphal “infancy gospels”, along with the canonical birth accounts. It seems not to have a specifically Christian audience in view. However, these essays do highlight insights of theological significance. Of particular interest, in view of the scope of my thesis, are: a study on the Italic birth myths of well-known people by Francesca Prescendi (2011, 3–14); an exploration of the way in which Luke uses parallelism to highlight key differences between accounts of the births of John and Jesus by Joseph Verheyden (2011, 137–160); and an article by one of the editors, Clivaz (2011, 161–186). She proposes the possibility of a multivalent reading of Luke 1:35, suggesting ways of moving beyond conceptions of orthodoxy and proto-orthodoxy.

The above overview draws attention to the trending shift away from historical-critical strategies, while drawing attention to more recent approaches that have begun to focus on literary and theological issues. The shift towards the recognition of (1) the value of social scientific models for the interpretation of the NT, (2) the value of literary approaches that are focussed on the interpretation NT texts in their final canonised form, and (3) the more self-consciously critical approaches of ideological, postcolonial and feminist criticism, has played a role in preparing the way for the development of SRI. Just as postcolonial criticism has served to reframe the infancy narratives in terms of their relevance for different contexts by probing possible expressions of critique against colonial powers engaged in ruling Israel at the time of Jesus, and just as feminist criticism highlighted the possibility of uniquely prophetic roles being described in respect of Elizabeth and Mary, so too issues around interpersonal power relationship frame my own analysis of possible asymmetrical honour-power relationships between central figure in Luke’s birth and infancy narratives.

## **2.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF SRI BY V. K. ROBBINS**

The fundamental elements of SRI have been described in three key publications by Robbins (1996a, 1996b, 2009). A helpful overview article on SRI by Robbins (2010b), and a collection of key SRI-related texts and publication-extracts assembled in a recent collection edited by Robbins, von Thaden and Bruehler (2016) also make important contributions. SRI provides the opportunity to draw on the findings of historical-criticism and social-scientific criticism, while listening for the voices expressed in rhetorical texture in texts. It provides a range of heuristic analytics utilising a multidimensional approach, guided by a dialogical hermeneutic (see Robbins, 2010b, 192).

Robbins has begun to apply SRI to the study of Luke’s Gospel in unpublished material from an SRI commentary on Luke’s Gospel (Robbins, 2004b), thus far featuring commentary on

aspects of Luke 1:1–25. In the available material, Robbins (2004b, 1–6) analyses the rhetography and argumentative texture of the opening verses of Luke 1. He investigates the social and cultural texture as well as the ideological texture of Luke’s prologue in 1:1–4. He then proceeds to analyse the rhetography and argumentative texture of 1:5–25. Aspects of intertexture, social and cultural, and ideological texture are identified in the opening-middle-closing texture of these verses, although his analysis of the closing texture is yet to be completed. His detailed explanation of how he has arrived at his identification of Luke’s blend of rhetorolects and rhetorical textures in the construction of this narrative is eagerly anticipated (see Robbins, 2004b, 7–18). A recent collection of articles featuring the application of SRI to Luke’s infancy narrative, edited by Robbins and Potter (2015) makes a valuable contribution to the discussion. Robbins (2015a, 2015b) contributes the first two essays providing insight into the interpretive strategies employed by his students. This brings me to a consideration of SRI as the interpretive strategy I have selected to use in my thesis. SRI purposefully uses rhetorical theory as its organising and application principal (Robbins, 1996a, 45). Rather than facilitating a focus on any particular aspect of communication, as tends to be the case with literary methods, rhetorical theory presupposes that “speaker, speech and audience are primary constituents of a situation of communication” (Robbins, 1996a, 45). By turning to rhetorical theory, SRI purposefully integrates social, ideological, cultural and literary strategies used by other interpreters into an interpretive analytical system (Robbins, 1996a, 46). This integrated aspect of SRI, along with its wide range of potential usage and application, makes it a suitable strategy for uncovering the variety of textures evident in Luke’s infancy narratives. I turn now to an overview of SRI and some of the reasons for its effectiveness.<sup>16</sup>

### **2.2.1 SRI employs dialogic criticism.**

In the manner envisioned by Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975), SRI purposefully embraces a dialogical approach as it explores different layers of meaning in texts.<sup>17</sup> Gowler, Bloomquist and Watson (2003, vii) hold that Robbins has demonstrated a good understanding of

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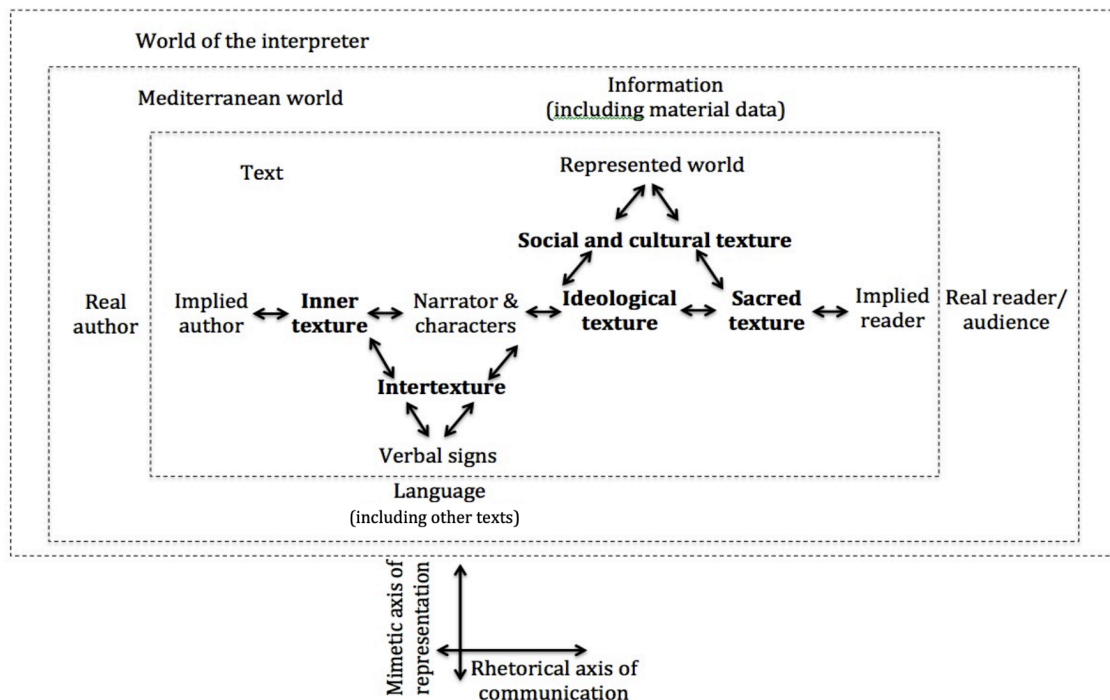
<sup>16</sup> In the two programmatic SRI books by Robbins (1996a, 1996b) there is not yet mention of rhetorolects, rhetography and rhetology. The first published mention of rhetorolects occurs in his article in *Scriptura* (2007b). The five textures discussed below form the primary expressions of rhetography and rhetology in Luke’s infancy narratives. He employs a variety of blends of the foundational rhetorolects to communicate meaning.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Holquist (2002) provides a helpful overview of the life and writings of Mikhail Bakhtin.

dialogical criticism. He refers to the fact that SRI attempts to create a “dialogical environment for analytical strategies from widely different arenas of investigation” (Robbins, 1996a, 15). Robbins holds that this dialogical benefit of SRI lies in its ability to invite “a wide range of historical, social, cultural, ideological and psychological phenomena into the project of theological reflection and construction” (Robbins, 1996a, 15). This dialogical aspect of SRI is particularly important for the interpretation of the multidimensional text of Luke’s infancy narratives. However, practitioners need to be aware of the danger of promoting SRI as the ideal strategy, thereby running the risk of losing the value of its dialogical essence.

### 2.2.2 SRI acknowledges textual realities.

Sociorhetorical interpretation also allows for consistent recognition of aspects of textual reality. Robbins (1996a, 21) has provided a helpful diagram to illustrate graphically the understanding of texts in the process of SRI analysis. I have slightly adapted the following diagram to include the addition of Sacred Texture, which Robbins added to his list of textures in *Exploring the texture of texts* (1996b, 120–131).



**Figure 2: Model of SRI conceptualisation of textual communication** (adapted from Robbins, 1996a, 21)

In Figure 2, the outer rectangle represents the boundaries to my limited encounter with the world of the real author, identified by church tradition as “Luke”, and with the

reader/audience of Luke's infancy narratives.<sup>18</sup> The rectangle inside this outer rectangle represents the boundaries to the real author and real reader/audience who have a limited encounter with their own world and the world of Luke's text. The real author of Luke's Gospel was a historical person who used language to interpret information available to him and to his real reader(s) or audience in the ancient Mediterranean world. The innermost rectangle represents the boundaries to the text of Luke's infancy narratives. The implied author is Luke, as he can be known through the text. Verbal signs relate to language in Luke's world in the same way that an implied author relates to the real author.

The approach to textual reality taken by SRI thus enables me to adopt the view that, even though Luke specifically addresses his gospel to Theophilus (Luke 1:1–4), his implied reader(s) falls(fall) into a category of first century citizens of the ancient Mediterranean world. With Nolland (1989, xxxii–xxxiii), I contend that his implied readers were substantially influenced by Jewish traditions and values, possibly God-fearers. The argumentation implied in Luke's writings includes many assumptions that "could only be true for people whose religious values had been considerably shaped by first-century Judaism" (Nolland, 1989, xxxii). This is supported by C. A. Evans (2005, especially pp. 8–10), who argues for the thoroughly Jewish nature of the gospels, including the Gospel of Luke. In support of his argument, he cites the similarities between Luke's writing style and that of the LXX, Luke's familiarity with the Jewish Scriptures, and the close cultural intertexture between Luke 1:32–35 and the *Aramaic Apocalypse* (4Q246) from Qumran, which I explore in chapter 4 (C. A. Evans, 2005, 8–9). As I will seek to show, such intertexture also includes close cultural connections between Luke's infancy narratives and texts from the OTP.

That being said, however, the clear implication of a cosmopolitan author and audience cannot be denied. Although familiar with Jewish traditions, Luke's infancy narratives are immersed in the Hellenistic and Roman traditions of the ancient Mediterranean world. The dedication to Theophilus in the prologue and the way in which the broader work of Luke-Acts reflects the spread of the gospel from a predominantly Jewish to a predominantly Gentile context, supports the commonly held view that Luke is a Gentile writing for a Christian-Gentile audience (see Blomberg, 2009, 170). Luke's concern for Gentiles is reflected in his universal vision for the implication of the ministry of Jesus, evident, for

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<sup>18</sup> Nolland (1989, xxxiv–xxxvii) provides a comprehensive survey of recent and ancient scholarship on the authorship of Luke. He concludes that, although the evidence is indecisive, he thinks it best to accept the arguments of early tradition identifying the author of Luke's Gospel with Luke, the fellow worker of Paul.

example, in his genealogy in Luke 3:23–38, which traces Jesus’ ancestry all the way back to Adam, thereby stressing the connection between Jesus and all people. This universal emphasis surfaces clearly in the doxology of Simeon in the temple, which climaxes with the declaration that the birth of Jesus is “a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel” (Luke 2:32).

Syiemlieh (2005, 35) has argued that Luke’s infancy narratives “form a self-contained unit belonging to an intermix or fusion of the Graeco-Roman biographical writings of Mediterranean antiquity and the Old Testament literary traditions concerning the birth of some great and special person.” I begin chapters 3 and 4 by exploring what can be determined from Luke’s respective infancy narratives concerning the social location of their implied audiences. Elements of Jewish and Graeco-Roman cultural intertexture are explored in my thesis, where such intertexture is deemed to have possibly played a role in shaping the sociorhetorical textures of Luke’s infancy narratives.

Robbins (1996a, 26) goes on to emphasise that the “dialogical relations between inside and outside, centre and margins, power and weakness, influence and exclusion, success and failure” serve as a foundational principle of SRI. These aspects of SRI make it a valuable tool in the exploration of an array of rhetorical strategies used by Luke to build the ideological texture of his infancy narratives.

### **2.2.3 SRI analyses the evocation of imagery and rhetorical argument in texts.**

Robbins (2008b, 81–102; 2009, 16–19) has more recently coined the terms “rhetography” and “rhetology” to refer to two modes of rhetoric in texts. These will be discussed here, even though their chronological emergence in the development of SRI came after the recognition of the five major rhetorical textures. I will begin by outlining some valuable contributions from cognitive science that help to explain the effectiveness of these modes of communication.

#### **2.2.3.1 Grounded cognition**

Recent insights into grounded cognition, in the field of cognitive science, suggest ways of understanding the effectiveness of the visual and argumentative texture of Luke’s infancy narratives (see Zhong and Liljenquist 2006; Lee and Schwarz, 2010). These insights suggest explanations for the mental processes at work when we make sense of Luke’s rhetorical strategies. SRI has already learned much from cognitive science in the area of human conscious cognition, especially in the field of conceptual blending. Cognitive processes are

at work as we read Luke's textured narratives. These processes facilitate meaningful communication.

Findings in the area of grounded cognition are particularly insightful in that they help us to understand why the graphic imagery used by Luke, for example in his description of the angel Gabriel appearing to Zechariah in the temple, potentially triggers sensory responses in the minds of readers imagining the recounted events. These insights explain the way in which the narrative invites readers into the world of the text as cognitive participants in the story, imagining the images evoked by Luke's descriptions.

### **2.2.3.2 Metaphorical associations**

Various studies have investigated the ways in which psychological outcomes can be directly affected by bodily experiences, demonstrating that psychological outcomes can typically be predicted, based on metaphorical association (Lee and Schwarz, 2014, 87). Classically, cognitive science has understood the process of rational choice to be influenced by directly relevant bodily experiences, including hunger and thirst (see LeDoux, 2012, 12). Recent studies have shown that, contrary to expectation, bodily experiences only relevant in a metaphorical sense also influence choice. Studies by Lichtenstein and Slovic (2006), Schwarz (2007, 2009), Smith and Conrey (2007), and Smith and Semin (2007) have shown that the ways people think and the ways in which they understand the choices they face and the situations in which they are embedded, strongly influence the way they act.<sup>19</sup> These studies suggest possible cognitive explanations for effective communication appealing to the imagination and physical senses.

Lakoff and Johnson (2003) have contributed to our understanding of the role of metaphor in Luke's narrative. They highlight the systematic patterns underlying metaphoric expression, showing that they are in constant use in an unconscious manner in everyday human language. Findings in the field of grounded cognition are confidently taken as the starting point by Labroo and Zhang (2011) in their introductory remarks on this theme.<sup>20</sup> Lee and Schwarz (2014, 87) emphasise that "a rapidly growing body of experimental

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<sup>19</sup> See, for example, the findings of Zhong and Liljenquist (2006) on the 'Macbeth Effect'.

<sup>20</sup> The findings of Labroo and Zhang (2011) in their introductory remarks on this theme also promise valuable insights into ritual cleansing and baptism practices common to many ancient and modern cultures and religious communities.

research provides persuasive evidence for the role of metaphors in human thought.” In the past, metaphorical language was largely understood by philosophy and linguistics to be the domain of imaginative and exceptional use. However, in terms of these new insights, metaphor also plays an important role in creative speech and the reading of texts. Recent studies in cognitive science emphasise, then, the close link between human bodily experiences and a range of different psychological experiences.<sup>21</sup> Such findings provide a valuable backdrop to my sociorhetorical analysis of Luke’s infancy narratives, especially in terms of the use of imagery in texts.

### 2.2.3.3 Rhetography

With these insights from neuroscience and cognitive science in mind, I turn now to the work of Robbins on rhetography. He defines rhetography as the “progressive, sensory-aesthetic, and/or argumentative texture of a text” that adds to the rhetorical force of imagery in texts (Robbins, 2009, xxvii). Robbins (2008b, 81) also describes rhetography as an appeal to the human ability to create graphic mental images in response to “the visual texture of a text”. The rhetography of a text is that aspect of a text that evokes a response involving the senses, motivating actions and ways of thinking while implying a “certain kind of truth and/or reality” (Robbins, 2008b, 102–103, note 3; 2009, xxv).

The approach of Robbins is enhanced and enriched by that of Rosemary Canavan (2015a, 141) who joins other biblical exegetes in the use of the term “visual exegesis”, an expression familiar to art critics. She uses the term to refer to the “interpretation of the biblical text in dialogue with its visual context” (2015a, 141).<sup>22</sup> She has found the multi-dimensional SRI approach of Robbins to be particularly helpful for her own efforts to interpret the dialogue between text and image as she investigates possible intertexture between a text and “visual material such as statuary, coins and monuments which operate in a network of meaning, a schema of propaganda and persuasion” (Canavan, 2015a, 150).

The argument of Canavan (2015a, 150) that first century texts weave images and their meanings into texts as part of their language of communication thus provides an interesting

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<sup>21</sup> See also the work on primary metaphor and subjective experience undertaken by Lakoff and Johnson (1999, 45–59).

<sup>22</sup> See the published doctoral thesis of Canavan (2012) in which she undertakes a detailed analysis of visual imagery in Colossians 3:1–17. See also her study on the clothing industry of first century Colossae (Canavan, 2015b), supporting her visual exegesis of Colossians 3:1–17.

intersection with Robbins's (2009, 16–17) own understanding of rhetography as comprising the “graphic picture in rhetorical description”. While for Robbins (2008b, 81) rhetography involves “the graphic images people create in their minds as a result of the visual texture of a text” which are manifested in various social and rhetorical textures, for Canavan (2015a, 150) meaning is expressed in the “metaphors and images employed in the narrative and discourse”. Canavan (2015a, 147) systematically engages in as many “arenas and levels” as possible, even though the layer of intertexture between the text and image from the cultural world of author and audience is the most obvious starting place for visual exegesis. Thus, although Canavan’s visual exegesis is not coterminous with Robbins’s rhetography, her approach interconnects with Robbins’s view and enriches it, while maintaining its own distinctives.

#### **2.2.3.4 Rhetology**

Robbins (2009, 16–17) goes on to speak of the need for interpreters to investigate the “logic of rhetorical reasoning” (rhetology) in texts. To this end he has developed the concept of rhetology. This concept builds on the foundation of his earlier conceptualisation of argumentative texture in SRI (Robbins, 2002). Robbins (2009, xxvii) describes rhetology as

[t]he argumentative texture of a text, which makes assertions supported by reasons and rationales; clarified by opposites and contraries; energized by analogies, comparisons, examples . . . ; and confirmed by authoritative testimony in a context either of stated conclusions or of progressive texture that invites a hearer/reader to infer a particular conclusion.

Robbins (2010b, 205) points to the need for interpreters to investigate both the “image tradition of inquiry” and the “logic tradition of inquiry” as a dual mode of inquiry.<sup>23</sup> Patterns evident in texts often point to a cognitive blending of images and of logical assertions. This line of reasoning is undergirded by the work of Fauconnier and Turner (2002, 48–49) who hold that humans

elaborate blends by treating them as simulations and running them imaginatively according to the principles that have been established for the blend. . . . Part of the power of blending is that there are always many different possible lines of elaboration . . .<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> In making this observation, Robbins is drawing on the work of Galison (1997, 19–31).

<sup>24</sup> Blending theory is discussed in greater detail in respect of the six rhetorolects in §2.2.9.1 later in this chapter.

In Luke 1 and 2, rhetology is also identifiable in the way in which a series of descriptions and accounts are purposefully woven together, and in which argumentative enthymemes are developed.<sup>25</sup> An example of an enthymeme can be found in the implied rhetology of Luke's argument that the role of Jesus is greater than that of John. This argument provides an important thrust of my thesis, especially in that it is used by Luke to develop the ideological texture of these texts. It can be summarised as follows:

- Implied rule (premise one): The one for whom John is to be forerunner is greater than John himself.
- Case (premise two): John is to be μέγας ἐνώπιον [τοῦ] κυρίου (Luke 1:15), and he will play an important role (Luke 1:16–17).
- Result (conclusion): The conclusion is that Jesus, the one for whom John will prepare the way, is greater than John (Luke 1:32–33).

Robbins (2009, 6) presupposes that first century Christians created new conceptual dimensions as they wove together existing modes of discourse. They were in fact reconfiguring preceding expressions of contemporary discourse as they blended together “pictorial narrative with argumentative assertions in ways that created distinctive social, cultural, ideological, and religious modes of understanding and belief” (Robbins, 2009, 6, see also Robbins, von Thadin and Bruehler, 2016, 24, esp. note 73). Rhetography and rhetology function in close relationship.

#### **2.2.4 SRI recognises the rhetorical function of inner texture in texts.**

Robbins (1996b, 7) has observed that the inner texture of texts can be identified in the actual language used. SRI explores various types of discourse without limiting its focus to either poetic or rhetorical boundaries. It recognises that language can be understood as a “symbolic act that creates history, society, culture and ideology as people know it, presuppose it and live concretely in it” (Robbins, 1996a, 46).

Patterns in texts include the repetition of words and statements that provide repetitive texture and pattern (Robbins, 1996a, 66–69; 1996b, 8). Authors may also use patterns in sequence to build an argument towards a conclusion, providing progressive texture and

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<sup>25</sup> See also the work on enthymemes by Bloomquist (1997b), Bloomquist and Carey (1999), and Robbins (2002, 2006).

pattern (Robbins, 1996a, 69–70; 1996b, 8–14). Narrational texture is located in the voice of a narrator of a text, and possibly in the voices of characters in a narrative (Robbins, 1996a, 72–77; 1996b, 15–19). Texts can also at times manifest opening-middle-closing texture, which constitutes the basis for the structural analysis undertaken later in this chapter. The findings are used to contribute towards the organisation of my thesis and, in this respect, SRI provides the organising principle.

Argumentative texture is located in the efforts of the author either to persuade, convince, inform, or even to transform the behaviour and conduct of readers. Authors may use argumentative texture to appeal to reason by means of either logical or qualitative reasoning that uses descriptions and images to convince readers of the truth of a line of communication (Robbins, 1996a, 77–89; 1996b, 21–29). Robbins later came to understand argumentative texture to comprise the rhetology of a text. As such, it “makes assertions supported by reasons and rationales; clarified by opposites and contraries; energized by analogies, comparisons, examples” (Robbins, 2009, xxvii; see § 2.2.3.4 above).

The different patterns of inner texture are not exclusive; for example, an author may utilise the progressive texture of a narrative while at the same time using visual texture (rhetography) to invite “a hearer/reader to infer a particular conclusion” (Robbins, 2009, xxvii). Narrational texture may in this way contribute to the rhetology of a text by implying a certain kind of reality, reinforcing the rhetorical force of a certain scenario or account.

Sensory-aesthetic texture is that aspect of a text that either appeals to the senses of a reader, or embodies senses in the discourse (Robbins, 1996a, 89–91; 1996b, 29–36; 2004c, 7). It resides in the range of senses evoked or embodied in a text. Texts can at times appeal to one or more of the traditionally recognised senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch). In the view of Robbins (1996b, 30), sensory-aesthetic texture can at times give specific tone and colour to elements of inner texture expressed in texts. Sensory-aesthetic texture can hereby heighten or enhance the rhetography of a text and can serve as part of the progressive texture (Robbins, 2009, xxvii). The discourse may also use “images that evoke feelings of cold, hard fact or abstract logic” (Robbins, 1996b, 30).<sup>26</sup>

Sensory-aesthetic texture can sometimes be identified in the descriptions of human behaviour in a text. Bernard de Geradon (1958) undertook an extensive study of the ways in

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<sup>26</sup> See the study on sensory perception in the Hebrew Bible by Avrahami (2012).

which words relating to parts of the human body (eyes, ears, mouth, hands, feet, and heart) are used to describe human beings in the Jewish Scriptures. He found that in the Jewish Scriptures such words are consistently used metaphorically to refer to aspects of human behaviour and responses, and provide insight into the understanding of human beings (De Geradon, 1958, 681–695). Furthermore, in the Jewish Scriptures, a person’s constitution is expressed by means of reference to three pairs of body parts: eyes/heart, mouth/ears, hands/feet. De Geradon (1958, 687) thus concluded that, “Décidément, le schème anthropologique est un ressort irrécusable du langage hébraïque, même si ses nombreuses formulations en estompent la présence aux yeux du lecteur.” Malina (2001 [1981], 68–71) later developed the ideas of de Geradon into a model that has proved useful for understanding the nature of human beings in the social and cultural world of the NT. Malina’s (2001 [1981], 69) model uses three body parts to describe three zones of human existence, namely (1) *the zone of emotion-fused thought*, involving verbs and nouns referring to the eyes and heart, (2) *the zone of self-expressive speech*, involving verbs and nouns referring to the mouth and ears, and (3) *the zone of purposeful action*, involving verbs and nouns referring to the hands and feet (see also Malina, 1979; 2001 [1981], 73–82). These three zones prove useful for the analysis of inner texture.

#### **2.2.4.1 Opening-middle-closing texture creates structure in Luke 1:5–2:40.**

The textual unit identified for my analysis comprises Luke 1:5–2:40. I am not including the prologue to Luke’s Gospel (1:1–4) in view of its specific genre. It does, however, introduce the implied author, identified by church tradition as Luke. The prologue manifests important social, cultural and ideological textures that point to the presence of these textures in the infancy narratives that follow. The following table outlines my findings in respect of the structure produced by the opening-middle-closing texture of Luke’s infancy narratives:

The birth narrative of John the Baptist			The birth narrative of Jesus of Nazareth		
<b>Narrative unit 1: John is honoured by Gabriel's nnunciation (1:5-25)</b>	<b>Opening texture (Luke 1:5-7)</b>	Introduction of characters	<b>Narrative unit 2: Jesus is honoured by the angelic annunciation to Mary (1:26-38)</b>	<b>Opening texture (Luke 1:26-27)</b>	Introduction to the annunciation account
	<b>Middle texture (Luke 1:8-23)</b>	John is honoured in Gabriel's annunciation		<b>Middle section (Luke 1:28-38a)</b>	Gabriel announces Jesus' birth
	<b>Closing texture (Luke 1:24-25)</b>	Elizabeth conceives as promised		<b>Closing texture (Luke 1:38b)</b>	Conclusion to the account
<b>Narrative unit 5: The Benedictus of Zechariah (1:67-80)</b>	<b>Opening texture (Luke 1:67)</b>	Zechariah filled with the Spirit	<b>Narrative unit 3: Jesus is honoured in the words of Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1:39-56)</b>	<b>Opening texture (Luke 1:39-45)</b>	Mary visits Elizabeth
	<b>Middle section (Luke 1:68-79)</b>	Zechariah's canticle		<b>Middle texture (Luke 1:46-55)</b>	Mary's doxology
	<b>Closing texture (Luke 1:80)</b>	<i>Inclusio</i> statement – John grows into adulthood		<b>Closing texture (Luke 1:56)</b>	<i>Inclusio</i> statement – Mary returns to Nazareth
<b>Narrative unit 4: The birth of John (Luke 1:57-66)</b>	<b>Opening texture (Luke 1:57a)</b>	A chronological link phrase	<b>Narrative unit 6: Jesus is honoured by being born in Bethlehem. (Luke 2:1-7 [21])</b>	<b>Opening texture (Luke 2:1-5)</b>	Setting of the scene
	<b>Middle texture (Luke 1:57b-64)</b>	John is born as promised (Luke 1:57b-58)		<b>Middle texture (Luke 2:6-7 [21])</b>	Jesus is born as promised
		Rites of passage honour John (Luke 1:59-64)			[Jesus is honoured by rites of passage – Luke 2:21]
<b>Closing section (Luke 1:65-66)</b>	John is destined for a great role in relation to Jesus	<b>Narrative unit 7: Honoured by an angelophany and shepherd-visit (Luke 2:8-20)</b>	<b>Opening texture (Luke 2:8)</b>	Shepherds living in the fields	
			<b>Middle texture (Luke 2:9-19)</b>	The declaration and praise of angels	
			<b>Closing texture (Luke 2:20)</b>	The shepherds return	
			<b>Narrative unit 8: Jesus is honoured by being presented at the temple (Luke 2:22-40)</b>	<b>Opening texture (Luke 2:22-24)</b>	Rites of passage for Jesus
				<b>Middle texture (Luke 2:25-38)</b>	Prophetic declarations by pious and righteous Jews
				<b>Closing texture (Luke 2:39-40)</b>	An <i>inclusio</i> statement

Figure 4: Opening-middle-closing texture reveals juxtaposing and weaving.

I have identified Luke 1:5–2:40 as the larger unit discussed in my analysis. The analysis concludes at Luke 2:40 in view of that verse marking the more obvious close to the infancy accounts of John and Jesus, manifest in a clear parallel with 1:80:

<b>Luke 1:80</b>	<b>Luke 2:40</b>
<p>Τὸ δὲ παιδίον ἠύξανεν καὶ ἐκραταιοῦτο πνεύματι, καὶ ἦν ἐν ταῖς ἐρήμοις ἕως ἡμέρας ἀναδείξεως αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὸν Ἰσραήλ.</p>	<p>Τὸ δὲ παιδίον ἠύξανεν καὶ ἐκραταιοῦτο πληρούμενον σοφία, καὶ χάρις θεοῦ ἦν ἐπ' αὐτό.</p>

**Figure 5: Comparison between Luke 1:80 and Luke 2:40**

I suggest that the opening and middle textures in Luke 1:5–23 (the major part of narrative unit 1), introducing Zechariah and Elizabeth to the implied readers, form the opening texture of the infancy narratives as a whole. Narrative unit 8 (Luke 2:22–40), telling of Jesus being presented at the temple, then forms the closing texture of the infancy narratives as a longer textual unit. This greater pericope deals with the birth and infancy of John and of Jesus. Its opening texture establishes the temple as the setting for the opening narrative unit, and the closing texture again establishes the temple as the scene for the closing narrative unit. The rhetorical importance of this observation will be considered in Chapters 3 and 4 of my thesis. The text of Luke 1:5–2:40 can be thought of as a narrative unit composed of a number of sub-units. Narrative unit 8 is then followed by a further textual unit in 2:41–52 describing the visit of the boy Jesus to the temple in the company of his parents. That section of narrative also ends with an *inclusio* providing a summary of the growth and development of Jesus, but one which does not manifest as close a parallel with Luke 1:80 as does 2:40, marking Luke 2:40 as a good closing point for my analysis.

There are also other interesting parallels. Both Luke 1:5 and Luke 2:1 begin with contextual events, one relating to the Jewish political setting (1:5), and the other relating to the Roman imperial situation (2:1). It could be argued, then, that in terms of the overall infancy narratives, both of these references constitute manifestations of opening texture: the first relating to the birth of John and the second to the birth of Jesus. Luke has carefully presented each of these two acts by weaving together a number of scenes in the various narrative units.

The various manifestations of opening-middle-closing texture employed by Luke in presenting these narratives create a series of smaller narratives woven together to achieve a dynamic portrayal of John as the one who is to prepare the people for the Lord. These textual units are interwoven and juxtaposed with units that portray the birth of Jesus. Luke also appears purposefully to have attempted to create coherent narrational time, and this

contributes to the complexity of the apparent overlap, interweaving and juxtaposing of the John and Jesus infancy narratives. In the opening texture of chapter 1, the narrative recounts the angel declaring to Zechariah that many people will rejoice at the birth of John because of his greatness before the Lord (Luke 1:15). Gabriel then tells Zechariah that John will fulfil the important role of turning many people back to God (1:16). Already in this promise, a limitation is placed on John's role: he is not himself the one who is to come, but rather, his role is to prepare the way for the *κύριος*.

With the wisdom of hindsight, it becomes evident that this reference to the coming *κύριος* already anticipates Luke's juxtaposing and interweaving of the John and Jesus infancy narratives. As the story unfolds, close parallels between key elements of the two infancy narratives begin to emerge. Luke's careful structure is seamlessly woven into the narrative by means of carefully constructed characterisation and development of the storyline through the progressive texture. These elements are employed rhetorically to strengthen the narrational force of his central message: Jesus is God's Messiah and John is his prophetic forerunner. As part of my SRI analysis, I explore the role of this structure in the development of the ideological texture of Luke's infancy narratives. My analysis of the opening-middle-closing texture of these texts has brought to light the following narrative units, each with their own opening-middle-closing texture. The units are numbered in the order in which they appear in Luke's writing.

Narrative unit 1: The annunciation of John (1:5–25)

Narrative unit 2: The annunciation of Jesus (1:26–38)

Narrative unit 3: The *Magnificat* of Mary (1:39–56)

Narrative unit 4: The birth of John (1:57–66)

Narrative unit 5: The *Benedictus* of Zechariah (1:67–80)

Narrative unit 6: The birth of Jesus (2:1–7)

Narrative unit 7: The doxology of angels and tribute of shepherds (2:8–21)

Narrative unit 8: Jesus is presented at the temple (Luke 2:22–40)

In figure 4 above, I have arranged these narrative units to depict the parallel elements of Luke's infancy narratives, and this in turn draws attention to their overall juxtaposition. The narrative units are thus sequenced in the table in such a way as to emphasise obvious conceptual and structural parallels between units 1 and 2, units 3 and 5, and units 4 and 6. This exercise does not say anything specific regarding the rhetorical development of the

progressive texture. The layout and sequencing of the table contents is merely intended to emphasise the clear conceptual parallels between the narrative units of the two juxtaposed birth and infancy narratives. Unit 7 marks a highpoint in the narrative series in that Jesus is honoured as Saviour, Lord and Messiah by angels to shepherds in a field (2:11). Narrative unit 8 completes the series with the presentation of the infant Jesus at the temple, and Jesus being recognised by Simeon as the *χριστὸν κυρίου* (2:26).<sup>27</sup>

As pointed out by Tannehill (1986, 20) in his work on the narrative unity of Luke-Acts, both similarities and differences are highlighted in a text by means of repetitive patterns, which in turn encourage readers to make comparisons. He holds that repetitive patterns are useful in suggesting to the reader “multiple possibilities of comparison” that facilitate a “complex interaction of narrative elements with an enriching background” (Tannehill, 1986, 20). These observations are pertinent to my analysis. Tannehill points out that such interaction is wider than any single episode and that such repetitive *texture* “awakens” echoes from other parts of the narrative and from other writings. This observation is particularly helpful in respect of the ways in which Luke develops the progressive texture of his infancy narratives. As the full point of Luke’s narrative gradually unfolds, the reader discovers a “deepening disclosure as new associations are suggested, guiding readers in the discovery of expanding symbols with hidden residues of meaning” (Tannehill, 1986, 20).

Robbins (2016b, 42–43), in his analysis of the opening-middle-closure texture of Luke 1:26–56, arrives at a different structural conclusion. Not as concerned as I have been with parallels between sections of the John and Jesus infancy narrative, Robbins opts rather to be guided by the different voices of the narrational texture. He suggests that the first level voice of the narrator in 1:26–30b, 39–42a, 46 and 56, interspersed as it is with the voices of the Gabriel, Elizabeth and Mary in the surrounding text, reveals the narrational boundaries of the beginning (1:26–38), middle (1:39–45) and end (1:46–56). He thus treats the whole of 1:26–56 as a single narrative unit rather than the two distinctive units identified in my analysis. I suggest that the clear parallels between the annunciation accounts of John and of Jesus, and the parallels between the doxologies of Mary and of Zechariah, suggest the plausibility of my decision to treat the annunciation of Jesus in 1:26–38, and the *Magnificat*

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<sup>27</sup> The observation of a close parallel between the various narrative units is not unique. For, example, in the 1970s, A. George (1970, 147–171) had already drawn attention to the parallel structure embedded in the opening chapters of Luke’s Gospel. The idea of a parallel is also picked up by Green (1997, 50) in his commentary on Luke’s Gospel.

of Mary in 1:39–56 (including their respective opening and closing textures) as two distinct narrative units.

### **2.2.5 SRI recognises the rhetorical function of intertexture in texts.**

Robbins (1996b, 40) describes intertexture as “a text’s representation of, reference to, and use of phenomena in the ‘world’ outside the text being interpreted”. Luke’s account of the birth of John and of Jesus is not compiled in a vacuum. As T. S. Eliot (1982[1919]) contended in 1919 already, tradition plays an important role in literature. New texts are created from a symbolic world or from earlier texts and traditions, drawing on their images and metaphors, thereby constantly creating intertexture (O’Day, 1990, 259).<sup>28</sup>

Etymologically, the term “intertextuality” means “a text between other texts” (Halliday, 1978, 85). In Luke’s infancy narratives, his language often interacts with other biblical and non-biblical texts. It also interacts with other factors “outside” the texts, including events in history, cultural customs, values, the roles played by people, social institutions, and organisational systems (see Robbins, 1996b, 40). Robbins (1996b, 40–68) identifies four modes of intertexture in texts: (1) oral-scribal intertexture, (2) cultural intertexture, (3) social intertexture, and (4) historical intertexture. In the words of Plett (1991, 5), intertexture “is not delimited, but de-limited, for its constituents refer to constituents of one or several other texts”. These are the factors that make intertextuality a diversified and complex phenomenon of linguistic semiotics. However, at the same time they account for some of the difficulties involved in responsible textual interpretation (Plett, 1991, 5).<sup>29</sup>

My thesis includes the analysis of various manifestations of oral-scribal intertexture, constituting the explicit or implicit use of language and concepts also evidenced in other texts, and cultural intertexture. Elements of historical and cultural intertexture are also identified. For example, a cursory reading of Luke 1 and 2 already suggests that Luke 1:17a manifests oral-scribal intertexture with references to the prophet Elijah in the Jewish

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<sup>28</sup> See also the important work on the analysis of intertextuality by Michael Fishbane (1980, 1985, 1986), who refers to the phenomenon of intertexture as “inner exegesis”.

<sup>29</sup> For a detailed study on the role played by influence and intertextuality in literary history see Clayton and Rothstein (1991). They trace the recognition of the importance of intertextuality back to the introduction of the term by Julia Kristeva in her work on Bakhtin. Worton (1986), in his investigation into the potential use and abuse of the analysis of intertexture as an interpretative strategy, concludes that investigating which texts an author remembers and forgets is correctly to be recognised as a “readerly practice”. (1986, 21).

Scriptures. Oral-scribal intertexture involves an aspect that Bloomquist (1997a, 202) refers to as the “rhetorical relationships of the text to other texts and resulting rhetorical and literary patterns”. Language from other texts is used in various ways in texts: reference to proper names of people and places (Bloomquist, 2002a, 3; Robbins, 2016b, 48); recitation (Robbins, 2016b, 48); recontextualisation (Robbins, 1996a, 107); reconfiguration (Robbins, 1996b, 50); and the echoing of an earlier text (Robbins, 1996a, 96–98). These expressions of intertexture manifest in various ways as Luke develops the ideological texture of his infancy narratives.

Since texts also describe, comment on, and interpret social and cultural realities from the world of the real author and real audience, SRI facilitates the analysis of social and cultural intertexture. This involves investigating the ways in which a text refers to, alludes to, or echoes culture as it is reflected or expressed in “word and concept patterns and configurations; values, scripts, codes or systems . . . and myths” (Robbins, 1996b, 58). The analysis of social and cultural intertexture involves the interpretation of social meanings reflected in texts. This involves the investigation of social roles, social institutions, social codes and social relationships outside of the text at the time of Luke’s composition (Robbins, 1996b, 62–63).

Texts also describe, comment on and interpret historical events, the census referred to in Luke 2:1–2 being one such event. My SRI analysis, therefore, also considers historical intertexture where relevant. Luke’s infancy narratives participate in “networks of communication that reverberate throughout the world” (Robbins, 1996a, 96). I will argue that Luke builds the rhetography and rhetology of his narratives in such a way as to provide them with a “richer, thicker quality”, thereby developing a dynamic expression of ideological texture (see Robbins, 1996b, 3, 95–96).

The way in which Luke’s infancy narratives echo ancient textual sources appears to be based on an assumption that literature and cultural practices from the past that have survived into the present have authority. Luke does not appear to be looking for novelty but rather he purposefully echoes ancient Israelite religious texts and traditions. However, he remains orientated towards the present. Mary’s statement in the opening lines of the *Magnificat* that “from now on all generations will call me blessed” sets up the interpretation of his climactic reference to Abraham and his descendants in 1:54–55 (see Pilch and Malina, 2016, xxix).

### **2.2.6 SRI recognises the rhetorical function of social and cultural texture in texts.**

SRI strategies use anthropological and sociological theory to investigate the social and cultural nature of the message of a text. In the 1960s, scholars began to turn to the social sciences as potential resources for the interpretation of the NT. Bryan R. Wilson (1963, 51–55; see also 1969; 1973) has identified seven different sociological responses to the world, identifiable in a wide variety of religious groups, namely, conversionist, revolutionist, introversionist, gnostic-manipulationist, thaumaturgical, reformist and utopian groups. In Robbins's (1996b, 72) view, Wilson's seven responses serve to create culture that provides groups and sects with "meaning, values, traditions, convictions, rituals, beliefs, and actions", and are useful for NT interpretation. Robbins holds that each of these categories expresses *social rhetoric* and that their consideration enables a description of the social and cultural texture created by the narrative. Robbins (1975, 147–150) has adapted Wilson's typology of sects to identify sociorhetorical descriptions of religious discourse, using seven different forms of sociological argumentation: conversionist (which argues that the outside world is corrupt and that it is inhabited by corrupt humans); revolutionist (which argues for the eschatological overturning of the current social order in the fulness of time); introversionist (which argues for individuals to withdraw from social reality); gnostic-manipulationist (which argues for "particular and distinctive knowledge", sometimes seeing it as the special knowledge of the movement); thaumaturgical (which argues for the possibility of people experiencing the miraculous effects of the supernatural in their lives); reformist (which argues for identity and engagement with the world, encouraging involvement in the world by way of good deeds); and utopian (which argues for the world to be built up by means of building community towards the ultimate goal of perfection). This taxonomy of seven different religious discourses has helped me to conceptualise something about the social location of the implied audience of these infancy narratives. My analyses of the birth narratives of John and Jesus identify a dominance of conversionist argumentation in John's narrative and of revolutionist rhetoric in the Jesus narrative.

In the early 1980s, Malina (see 1986) introduced the concept of common social and cultural systems and institutions. As mentioned in § 2.1, the most helpful recent work in the field of social-scientific criticism has come from members of the Context Group, who have demonstrated the value of social-scientific models for NT interpretation (see Malina, 2001 [1981]; Neyrey, 2005, 2010; Malina, 2016b), and specifically for the interpretation of the Gospel of Luke (Malina, 1991; Malina and Neyrey, 1991). Members of the Context Group have purposefully developed social-scientific and anthropological models from the results

of research into social values and customs of rural communities relatively untouched by technological development and, therefore, in many ways similar to ancient Mediterranean society. They point out that all historical interpreters are by nature shaped by their social and cultural location. They argue that social-scientific models introduce a degree of control into the interpretive process by enabling self-critical re-evaluation and modification of presuppositions and assumptions (see Neyrey, 1991, ix–xvii).

The approach has, however, faced objections and reservations, especially regarding the use of social-scientific models. Judge (1980) warned against the “sociological fallacy”, referring to social-scientific models based on observations of other cultures. In similar vein, Stowers (1985, 150) has expressed the concern that social-scientific interpretation of the NT “too readily assumes commensurability between ancient and modern societies and ancient and modern thought”. Contributors to a publication edited by Gilmore (1987), and articles by Herzfeld (1980, 1984), call into question approaches that treat “the Mediterranean” as if it comprised a unified cultural zone. They argue that the treatment of *honour* and *shame* as sociological models in fact creates ineffective glosses that blend together a wide variety of indigenous social and cultural systems. They point out that such models employ generalisation of data from restricted areas, ignoring variability in local cultures across the Mediterranean region.<sup>30</sup> However, the publication by Gilmore (1987) deals with the social and anthropological analysis of contemporary society and its articles are thus not directly relevant to the field of NT studies, even though the honour-shame model was first theorised in the context of such isolated modern-day communities.

Taking these warnings seriously, Craffert (1992) has helpfully suggested that careful constraints be implemented alongside the use of social-scientific models in order to avoid the material under consideration being shaped, filtered and highlighted in predetermined ways. It is my conviction that the dialogical approach underlying SRI provides intrinsic controls that hold social and cultural observations in tension with the insights gained in respect of the other textures, making it a valuable tool in my SRI analysis. The social-scientific models of patron-client and honour-shame models have proved useful for my analysis. Robbins (1996b, 86–88) is convinced that the process of interpreting texts has greatly benefited from insights into the variety of ways in which culture manifests in

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<sup>30</sup> For a critique of an over-dependence on models in social-scientific NT criticism and the need for a more critical social theory, see also Horrell (2000).

society, and the ways in which social and cultural elements in the world of a text are expressed rhetorically. Social and cultural texture can be identified both in the world of the text, and in the intertexture between aspects of the text and social and cultural realities in the world of the real author (Robbins, 1996b, 71).

My thesis draws particularly on observations of patron-client and honour-shame models in the social and cultural texture. The findings support the argument that Luke purposefully develops the rhetography and rhetology of his infancy narratives to strengthen his portrayal of the honour-power relationship between John and Jesus as revealed in the progressive texture of his infancy narratives. I have been motivated by the prevalence of the honour value in the narrative of Luke 1 and 2 to make this social-scientific model a key touchstone for identifying ideological texture in Luke's infancy narratives. I will now introduce the two relevant social-scientific models in some detail.

### **2.2.6.1 The patron-client system**

The patron-client system facilitates the provision of economic, political or legal favours in exchange for honour, loyalty and other forms of support. Elliott (1996, 148) describes patron-client relationships as relationships that express "loyalty and commitment (*fides*) of some duration entered into voluntarily by two or more individuals of unequal status". Saller (1982, 1) holds that the three vital elements of relationships that constitute patronage under the early Roman empire were that (1) the relationship was reciprocal, and it involved some form of exchange of goods or services; (2) the relationship was personal, and it endured for some time; and (3) the relationship involved an asymmetrical social, economic or power relationship between two parties.<sup>31</sup> A patron-client relationship is based on "differences in social roles and access to power, and involves the reciprocal exchange of different kinds of goods and services of value to each partner" (Elliott, 1996, 148; see also, Batten, 2010, 167–177, and Wallace-Hadrill, 1989). Eisenstadt and Roniger (1980, 42–77) have identified two key focus areas in the application of patronage, namely, relationships between a single patron and his or her client, and interactions between associations of a social and institutional nature.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> This view is supported by the contributors to the volume on patronage in ancient society edited by Wallace-Hadrill (1989), particularly Saller's contribution in chapter 2.

<sup>32</sup> In terms of SRI and rhetorical analysis, references to the patron-client system and honour-shame values constitute *topoi* (see § 2.2.9.3).

### 2.2.6.2 The value of honour-shame

Another social and cultural value helpful for my thesis is that of honour-shame. This was a pivotal value in antiquity (Neyrey, 2008, 89), being “the premier value that drove the behaviour of the ancients” (Neyrey, 2010, 183). It expresses the value of a person from his or her own perspective and from the perspective of his or her social community, that is, an expression of one’s public standing (see Neyrey, 1998, 14–68; Malina, 2001 [1981], 27–57). Neyrey (2010, 183) points to Aristotle’s description of fame and honour, providing valuable insight into the importance of honour-shame in the ancient Mediterranean world:

Fame means being respected by everybody, or having some quality that is desired by all men, or by most, or by the good, or by the wise. Honour is the token of a man's being famous for doing good . . . for many gain honour for things which seem small, but the place and the occasion account for it. The constituents of honour are: sacrifices; commemoration, in verse or prose; privileges; grants of land; front seats at civic celebrations; state burial; statues; public maintenance; among foreigners, obeisances and giving place; and such presents as are among various bodies of men regarded as marks of honour. (*Ars. Rhet.*, 1.5.8–9)

Neyrey (2010, 183) explains that honour can either be *ascribed* or *achieved* (sometimes referred to as *acquired*). Honour can be *ascribed* by way of kinship connections, for example, Jesus being declared to be a son of David (Luke 1:32, 35; 3:31,34); Zechariah, a member of the priestly order of Abijah and chosen by lot to serve in the temple, implying God’s selection; and Elizabeth being identified as kin of Aaron.<sup>33</sup> The peoples of the ancient Mediterranean world were strongly group-orientated, personal identity being perceived to lie by and large in one’s relationship to tribe, clan, parent, or husband (Neyrey, 2010, 185). A close connection between kinship and honour can be observed in Luke 1:5–7; 28–38a; 46–55; and 59–66. Honour can also be *ascribed* when a high-status person declares the honourable status of another (in the case of John’s annunciation, the angel Gabriel making promises about John), or in the case of the angel declaring Jesus to be the Son of God. This is the dominant form of honour communicated in Luke’s infancy narratives. On the other hand, *achieved/acquired* honour is attributed when someone wins the respect or

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<sup>33</sup> See Rohrbaugh (2000, 215–218) for a valuable discussion of Luke’s use of *ascribed* honour and *achieved* honour in his proclamation of Jesus to his implied readers

admiration of others by way of their actions, skills or accomplishments. I have not identified *achieved/acquired* honour in Luke's infancy narratives.<sup>34</sup>

### **2.2.7 SRI recognises the rhetorical function of sacred texture in texts.**

Robbins (1996b, 4, 120–131) describes sacred texture as that aspect of a text which deals with the relationship between humans and the divine. Sacred texture can be identified in texts that deal with “deity, holy persons, spirit beings, divine history, human redemption, human commitment, religious community, and ethics” (Robbins, 1996b, 130). The Jewish Scriptures, the NT, texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) and OTP, as well as scriptures from other religions, contain sacred texture. Sacred texture is often an area of interest to interpreters of the HB and NT. My thesis argues that Luke purposefully weaves aspects of sacred texture into his infancy narratives, for example, in his references to angelic appearances to Zechariah, Mary and the shepherds. Sacred texture is also present in Luke's references to sacred space in the temple, temple practices, and holy people (Zechariah and Elizabeth, Simeon, Anna the prophet). It will become clear in my SRI analysis that sacred texture also enriches Luke's juxtaposing of the two infancy narratives as he develops the ideological texture of his infancy narratives.

### **2.2.8 SRI recognises the rhetorical function of ideological texture in texts.**

Robbins (1996a, 192–236; 1996b, 95–119) identifies ideological texture as a key rhetorical texture in texts. In my thesis I argue that this is also true for Luke's infancy narratives. Robbins (1996a, 192–196; 1996b, 95–96) recognises the multiplicity of understandings in respect of the concept of ideology. He holds that it can be located in texts in terms of the “reciprocity between meanings and meaning effects of the text in its world and meanings and meaning effects in the world of the real reader” (Robbins, 1996a, 37). He goes on to locate ideology in “the particular ways in which our speech and action, in their social and cultural location, relate to and interconnect with resources, structures and institutions of power” (Robbins, 1996a, 36). Charles A. Wanamaker (2003, 196) makes the relationship between ideology and power even more explicit when he states that ideology is concerned with the “maintenance and reproduction of social power.” Robbins (1996b, 4) also holds that ideology concerns “particular alliances and conflicts [that] the language in a text and the language in an interpretation evoke and nurture”. In this regard Robbins (see 1996a,

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<sup>34</sup> See Neyrey (2010, 183) for an explanation of the role of gender in the allocation of honour in the Mediterranean world.

36) is influenced by the work of the literary critic, Terry Eagleton (2008). In §§ 2.2.8.1–2.2.8.2 below, I will explore in greater detail the conceptualisation of ideology. In clarifying my own approach, I make substantial use of the work of John B. Thompson (1984, 1990). In doing so, I take my cue from Wanamaker (2003, see especially his discussion on pp. 195–201), who has found Thompson’s critical approach to be particularly helpful in his own work on 2 Corinthians 10–13. Thompson provides a language of description for the articulation of my arguments in respect of the inner workings of Luke’s use of ideological texture. Robbins (1996a, 37) suggests that ideological texture can be located in the reciprocity between (1) the implied author, in this case, Luke; (2) the characters that populate the narratives; and (3) the words, syntax and rhetoric used to create the world of the text. Because life experience teaches us that “[i]ndividuals situated within socially structured contexts have, by virtue of their location, different quantities of, and different degrees of access to, available resources” (Thompson, 1990, 59), we can assume that ideological texture is in some way related to social location. Thompson (1990, 59) points to the influence of social location on the endowment of individuals with degrees of “power”:

The social location of individuals, and the entitlements associated with their positions in a social field or institution, endow them with varying degrees of “power”, understood at this level as a socially or institutionally endowed capacity which enables or empowers some individuals to make decisions, pursue ends or realise interests.

Robbins (1996b, 96–100) also draws attention to the need for interpreters to be purposefully self-conscious of the influence of their own social location on the interpretive process. Schüssler Fiorenza (1988) highlights the role of ideology in shaping and influencing authoritative interpretive traditions (see also Schüssler Fiorenza, 1988, 1993). In Luke’s infancy narrative, ideological texture manifests in the social location of (1) the interpreter of these texts and the interpretive traditions that shape, empower or disempower him/her; (2) the implied author, in this case, Luke; and (3) the characters portrayed in the narrative. It is this third location that I will make the focus of my analysis of ideological texture.

### **2.2.8.1 Defining ideology**

In seeking to define ideology, Robbins (1996a, 193–194) initially draws on the understanding of Elliott (2005, 12) who quotes Davis (1975, 14), defining ideology as “an integrated system of beliefs, assumptions and values, not necessarily true or false, which reflects the needs or interests of a group or class at a particular time in history”. Elliott and Davis thus tend to approach ideology in terms of “worldview”, although the reference to the

role of “interests of a group or class” provides a clue to the role of ideology in interpersonal relationships. This observation urges the search for a more critical approach to ideology, and this leads me to consider the work of John B. Thompson (1984, 1990), whose understanding of ideology is particularly useful for an SRI analysis of Luke’s infancy narratives. He refers to a “critical conception of ideology” that tends to understand ideology as having a pejorative, critical or negative aspect to its essence; for him, “[t]o study ideology is to study the ways in which meaning (signification) serves to sustain relations of domination” (Thompson, 1984, 130–131). In his view, the concept of ideology can refer to the “ways in which meaning serves, in particular circumstances, to establish and sustain relations of power which are systematically asymmetrical” (Thompson, 1990, 7). Systematically asymmetrical power relationships involve individuals or groups endowed with power in such a way as to exclude others (Thompson, 1990, 59). Such asymmetrical power relationships make power inaccessible to others. These relationships can also be spoken of as “domination”. The fact that Luke’s infancy narratives portray a number of different characters, all in some way relating to one another, suggests the possibility of interpersonal power relationships manifesting in the text. This potentially provides a further rhetorical texture to be investigated in my SRI analysis.

### **2.2.8.2 The relationship between ideology and power**

It becomes evident from a collection of primary readings on the ideology compiled by Eagleton (1994b), that a wide range of conceptualisations of ideology are on offer, ranging from neutral to critical. Since the relationship between ideology and power promises to be the most fruitful for SRI, a more critical conceptualisation of ideology is best suited to my ends. Marxist conceptualisations of ideology are particularly helpful in this regard. They have exercised considerable influence in the fields of social science and economic theory, especially in terms of conceptualisations of *power* and *domination*.<sup>35</sup>

Marxist analysis has served as a key catalyst in the development of social, economic and political theory over the course of the 20th century. It was an important contributor to the development of sociology as an academic discipline, via Max Weber’s *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (1922), and the work on communication theory and the public sphere of Jürgen

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<sup>35</sup> See Eagleton (2006, 2008) for examples of literary analysis shaped by Marxist thought; see Bottomore (1984, 2010) for an example of social science shaped by Marxist theory; see Wolff and Barsamian (2012) for an example of Marxist conceptualisation of economic theory.

Habermas (1984, 1987). Through the influence of Max Weber and other European thinkers, including Bourdieu, Foucault and Baudrillard, issues of power and knowledge came to play an important role in social analysis.<sup>36</sup> Robbins (1996a, 36) has found the work of Marxist literary critic Terry Eagleton helpful in his own conceptualisation of ideology. Eagleton (2008, 13) recognises a close connection between ideology and power, locating ideology in

the ways in which what we say and believe connects with the power-structure and power-relations of the society we live in . . . I do not mean by ‘ideology’ simply the deeply entrenched, often unconscious beliefs which people hold; I mean more particularly those modes of feeling, valuing, perceiving and believing which have some kind of relation to the maintenance and reproduction of social power.<sup>37</sup>

Eagleton (2008, 13) thus takes further the approach of Elliott and Davis referred to above. According to him, ideology involves “modes of feeling, valuing, perceiving and believing which have some kind of relation to the maintenance and reproduction of social power”. Wanamaker (2003, 198–201) has drawn attention to the fact that, “domination results from asymmetrical relations of power.”<sup>38</sup> Thompson (1984, 130) explains that “systematically asymmetrical” power-relationships occur when

particular agents or groups of agents are institutionally endowed with power in a way which excludes other agents or groups of agents and, to some significant degree, remains inaccessible to them irrespective of the basis upon which such exclusion is carried out.

In this regard, and especially in terms of the way in which power relationships are manifestly at play in Luke’s birth and infancy narratives, it is important to keep Eagleton’s (2008, 13) reference to the maintenance and reproduction of “social power” in mind, especially when considering Thompson’s understanding of ideology as an element of domination. The understanding that interpersonal power can at times be expressed in terms of social power, is relevant for a reading of Luke’s birth and infancy narratives. My argument that it becomes increasingly clear in the progressive texture of the narratives that

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<sup>36</sup> See especially Max Weber’s chapter “Stände und Klassen” in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (1922). Further studies in this regard include the work of P. Bourdieu (1994; 1994b) on language and symbolic power; the work of Michel Foucault (1980, 1982, 2001) on power and knowledge; and the neo-Marxist and eventually poststructuralist studies of Jean Baudrillard (1988) on socialism and the new communication and media.

<sup>37</sup> Elsewhere, Eagleton (1994a, 8) has described ideology as “a set of discursive strategies for legitimating a dominant power”. Robbins (1996a, 36) draws on the original 1983 publication of this quote in his definition of ideology.

<sup>38</sup> For easily accessible outlines of Thompson’s understanding of ideology, see Thompson (1984, 130–132; 1990, 53–54).

Jesus is superior to John, is not to be misconstrued as Jesus squelching the followers of John the Baptist in an attempt to preserve the power of the emerging community around Jesus. Rather, the social power of Jesus over and against John is to be understood in social terms relating to leadership, authority and impact on his followers and on society in general.

In the view of Eagleton (1991, 223), ideology is involved whenever power in some way influences and shapes the things we say. Eagleton's insights remind SRI practitioners that the analysis of ideological texture is not a neutral activity. This process is potentially evident, for example, in Mary's *Magnificat*. God has "brought down [καθεῖλεν] the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up [ὑψωσεν] the lowly" (1:52), that is, the traditionally powerful will be stripped of their powerful positions and the downtrodden will be empowered. In 1:53, Mary's *Magnificat* goes on to say that, by way of implication, those who have gone without resources because of their poverty (πεινῶντας) are the very ones who are going to be blessed. Those who have enjoyed the privileges of their wealth (πλουτοῦντας) are going to miss out in the future (ἐξάπεστειλεν κενούς).

Thompson (1990, 60–61) has conceptualised five modes of ideological operation in society by means of which meaning is employed in the service of power, namely, *legitimation*, *dissimulation*, *unification*, *fragmentation* and *reification*. He suggests that these strategies become ideological when used to subvert or sustain, to establish or to undermine, relations of power and domination. Thompson's modes of operation of ideology provide a more detailed description of what Foucault (1982) has referred to as, "the means of bringing power relations into being". Thompson's suggested modes of operation add content, then, to Foucault's, "degrees of rationalisation". Thompson's insights also clarify the fact that ideological phenomena (identified by Foucault as "systems of differentiation") begin as strategies of symbolic construction employed to achieve *fragmentation* on the part of potential opponents to relations of domination. I would suggest that Foucault's "forms of institutionalisation" reflect a later stage in the establishment of power relations, once aspects of Thompson's "modes of operation" have been *institutionalised*. The following table summarises each of the categories that prove invaluable for the analysis of ideological texture in the narratives of the birth of John and of Jesus.

<p><b>Legitimation</b> Power relations are sometimes established and sustained by being presented as worthy of support because, it is claimed or implied, they are <i>legitimate</i> and just on rational grounds, traditional grounds or on the grounds of the charisma of the individual exercising authority (Thompson, 1990, 61–62)</p>	<p><b>Universalisation</b> Thompson (1990, 62) describes <i>universalisation</i> as the representation of institutional arrangements that serve the interests of a limited number of individuals, as if they serve the interests of all.</p>
	<p><b>Narrativisation</b> This involves telling stories of the past in such a way as to reflect present conditions as if they are part of a cherished past, having claims to <i>legitimacy</i> embedded in the narratives themselves; aimed at justifying power on the part of the powerful, and to enable the disempowered to come to terms with their lack of power (Thompson, 1990, 62).</p>
<p><b>Dissimulation</b> Thompson (1990, 62) holds that relations of domination are at times established and sustained by being denied, obscured or concealed. They may also be discussed in such a way as to deflect attention away from existing processes or relations.</p>	<p><b>Euphemisation</b> Thompson (1990, 63) describes the use of <i>euphemisation</i> in service of ideology as involving the description or re-description of social relations, actions or institutions in terms that evoke a positive response.</p>
	<p><b>The use of trope</b> This involves the figurative use of language in synecdoche, metonymy and metaphor, in such a way as to disguise social relations (Thompson, 1990, 63).</p>
<p><b>Unification</b> This is the third mode of operation identified by Thompson (1990, 64–65) as a means by which relations of domination are established and sustained. Operating at the symbolic level, this mode involves the construction of “a form of unity which embraces individuals in a collective unity, irrespective of the differences and divisions that may separate them” (Thompson, 1990, 64).</p>	<p><b>Standardisation</b> Thompson (1990, 64) describes this as the adaptation of symbolic forms to a standard framework, which is then promoted as the commonly accepted basis for symbolic exchange.</p>
	<p><b>Symbolisation of unity</b> This involves the construction of symbols of unity, identification and group identity (Thompson, 1990, 64).</p>
<p><b>Fragmentation</b> This mode of operation of ideology involves purposefully setting about processes aimed at fragmenting opposition groups (Thompson, 1990, 65).</p>	<p><b>Expurgation of the other</b> This involves the construction of an enemy within or without “the camp” portrayed as evil or as a potentially harmful threat to existing relations, and against which individuals are called upon to unite in resistance (Thompson, 1990, 65).</p>
<p><b>Reification</b> This mode of operation for the establishment or maintenance of relations of domination involves “representing a transitory, historical state of affairs as if it were permanent, natural, outside of time”, thereby eclipsing the historical and social character of circumstances under consideration (Thompson, 1990, 65).</p>	<p><b>Eternalisation</b> This involves the portrayal of socio-historical situations or phenomena as unchanging, permanent and ever-recurring, thereby stripping them of their historical character (Thompson, 1990, 65–66).</p>
	<p><b>Nominalisation and passivisation</b> Thompson (1990, 65–66) describes these strategies as employing a variety of syntactic and grammatical devices, such as the careful choice of grammatical constructions that focus the attention of hearers or readers on certain themes at the neglect of others.</p>

**Figure 3: Modes of operation whereby meaning is employed in the service of power**

Thompson’s modes of operation include the strategies of *rationalisation*, *displacement*, *differentiation* and *naturalisation* in addition to the above categories. Since my analysis has not identified the presence of these strategies in the infancy narratives, they are excluded

from table 3. The SRI analysis of ideological texture in the John and Jesus infancy narratives is undertaken in chapters 3 and 4 as part of my comprehensive investigation of the infancy narratives.

### **2.2.9 SRI recognises different modes of discourse (rhetorolects).**

I turn now to the SRI approach to modes of discourse in texts. Before outlining the various rhetorical dialects identified by Robbins, I will identify some of the ways in which conceptual blending theory and critical spatial theory have informed the understanding of the way in which rhetoric functions in NT texts.

#### **2.2.9.1 Conceptual blending theory lays the foundation.**

There are important similarities between the way in which Robbins (2009, 104) suggests that discourse functions, and the notion of an Idealised Cognitive Model (ICM), as conceptualised in the field of cognitive science (see Lakoff, 1990). Lakoff (1990, 68) has defined an ICM as “a complex structured whole, a gestalt, which uses four kinds of structuring principles”. Robbins (2009, 104) has listed these four ICM principles as (1) propositional structure – evident in the argumentative-enthymematic dimension of a *topos*;<sup>39</sup> (2) image-schematic structure – evident in the image-schematic and descriptive-narrative structure of a *topos*; (3) metaphoric mappings and blending theory, as identified by Lakoff and Johnson (2003, 243–274); and (4) metonymic mappings, evident in the use of metonyms, thereby reinforcing the understanding that cognitive blending entails combining “dynamic cognitive models in a network of *mental spaces*” (Fauconnier, 1994, xliii–xlv; Coulson and Oakley, 2003, 51–80). The incorporation of insights from critical spatiality theory has led to the realisation that cognition entails a blending of mental spaces. These insights have proved helpful for SRI in terms of understanding the way in which modes of discourse facilitate a blending of cognitive spaces. Robbins (2015b, 18) has concluded that early Christian narrative expressed itself in the blending of various modes of discourse.

Fauconnier and Turner (2002, 48) refer to this blending process as “pattern completion”. They argue that, rather than functioning “as a container of fixed entities (like impressions in

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<sup>39</sup> See § 2.2.9.3 for a discussion of what can be understood by *topos/topoi* from an SRI perspective.

a wax tablet) . . . memory is a complex and dynamic process of constructing a complex scene and marshalling our learned capacity to order successive changes.” Blending theory specialist Oakley (1999, 110) holds that the human rhetorical potential has the capacity to construct elaborate scenes from memory as “certain elements are afforded a great deal of attention in working memory, while other elements are severely attenuated from working memory.”

These insights from cognitive science helped Robbins (2007b, 357–358; 2009, 104–105) to conclude that various forms of reasoning and argumentation are evident in different discourse modes. The similarity between cognitive science’s understanding of the workings of ICMs and this insight of Robbins led to his conceptualisation of rhetorolects, a term he arrived at by contracting “rhetorical” and “dialects” (Robbins, 2007b) . Rhetorolects can be illustrated by way of reference to Luke’s infancy narratives.

Evidence suggests that Luke’s infancy narratives are written from within a social context shaped by first century Judaism, even though composed in Greek in continuation with the tradition of the LXX. Luke’s reconfiguration of a wide range of strands of Jewish tradition proved to be highly persuasive and lasting in largely Hellenistic-Roman contexts in the Mediterranean world. His merging of streams from these different traditions has led to a breadth of persuasiveness. As pointed out in § 2.2.5 above, the implied author and readers of Luke’s Gospel are predominantly orientated towards the present (see Pilch and Malina, 2016, xxix). Luke’s motivation for recounting the infancy narratives of John and Jesus appears to be his conviction of their present relevance for his readers. His stated purpose to Theophilus is “that [he] may know the truth concerning the things about which [he has] been instructed.” He wants Theophilus to know this truth in his present experience.

In order to communicate this truth, Luke draws on the past as his secondary time-preference. The events of the birth of John and of Jesus are thus communicated in such a way as to root them firmly in the faith and cultural heritage of the people of Israel. With this goal in mind, Luke has clearly drawn on Greek texts from the LXX and he has used Hebrew and Aramaic words and concepts from the social and cultural world of Second Temple Judaism. His reconfiguration and reframing of these concepts appear to suit his own ends and to meet the needs of his audience. To these ends his translations and reconfigurations have been blended together into a variety of rhetorical expressions. These conceptual blends are woven into the rhetorical construction of his narrative. This process appears to have contributed to the rapid uptake and embrace of Jesus as the Messiah in the Mediterranean world in the decades that followed. The insights from conceptual blending

theory thus explain important aspects of Luke's rhetorical strategy in the development of the rhetography and rhetology of his infancy narratives by means of which he has set up the juxtaposing and interweaving of his birth accounts of John and Jesus.

### **2.2.9.2 Critical spatial theory contributes to the conceptualisation of *rhetorolect*.**

Robbins (2009, 3) has drawn attention to the fact that the texts of the NT were not written on the presupposition that the courtroom, political assembly and civil ceremony were the source of positive experiences for early Christians. On the contrary, these social institutions were frequently experienced as problematic, and were often in fact the cause of suffering for early Christians. He contends that, in the development of the argumentation expressed in their writings, early Christians turned to the use of verbal pictures based on the relationship between their own physical bodies and social institutions known to them. Such institutions included social interactions in the context of family, imperial households, political kingdoms, temples and imperial armies.

Robbins (2009, 7–9; 2010b, 192; see Tan, 2018, 22–29) has clarified these observations into six major rhetorical modes of communication called rhetorolects, namely, prophetic, apocalyptic, wisdom, pre-creation, priestly and miracle rhetorolects. His stated aim has been to provide insight into “the ways Christian thinking, reasoning, and believing work internally and in relation to other kinds of thinking, reasoning and believing” (Robbins, 2009, 6).

Robbins (2009, 12) refers to Bakhtin's insight that humans use discourses in ways that “send them centrifugally out from local contexts into multiple contexts throughout the inhabited regions of the world”. He has purposefully sought to conceptualise his understanding of early Christian discourse in a way that is “full-bodied”, thereby avoiding body-mind dualism in the process of interpretation (see Robbins, 2009, 8–11). The insights gained from cognitive science in terms of blending theory and ICMs helped to clarify Robbins's thinking in this regard. He came to realise that a full-bodied mode of interpretation needs to be informed by “the social, cultural, ideological, and religious geography of early Christian discourse” (Robbins, 2009, 11). Robbins came to see that the rhetography and rhetology of early Christian discourse take the understanding of metaphoric mappings seriously. This led him to recognise the value of insights from critical spatiality theory learnt from the use of ICMs.

Critical spatiality theory has helped to explain the relationship between experiences of geophysical spaces and the mental spaces we create in order to make sense of our world and experience of daily life (Robbins, 2009, 8).<sup>40</sup> The works of Henri Lefebvre (1974), Homi K. Bhabha (1994) and Edward W. Soja (1989, 1996) were foundational to the conviction of Robbins (2009, 90) that the critical analysis of “social and cultural places and spaces in early Christian literature, as well as in first-century Mediterranean material culture, needs to be incorporated into sociorhetorical commentary on NT writings.”

Soja has developed Lefebvre’s thinking into what he calls a “thirling” approach. He describes this thirling approach as “a creative combination and extension, one that builds on a firstspace perspective that is focussed on the real material world and a secondspace perspective that interprets this reality through imagined representations of spatiality” (Soja, 1996, 6). Soja (1996, 10) explains that geographical spatial imagination has traditionally embraced a dualistic approach that has tended towards either *firstspace* thinking, focused on measurable, concrete forms of life and reality in the material world, or *secondspace* thinking, “conceived in ideas about space, in thoughtful re-presentations of human spatiality in mental or cognitive forms”, that is, imagined space. Lefebvre introduced a third alternative that he called *lived space*; what Soja calls *thirdspace*. In the view of Soja (1996, 10), thirdspace thinking can typically be seen as “a simple combination or mixture of the ‘real’ and the ‘imagined’ in varying doses”.

Critical spatiality has proved invaluable in biblical and religious studies. In his study on private and public space in Luke’s description of the life and ministry of Jesus, Bart Bruehler (2011, 14–21) provides an insightful survey of recent work applying critical spatiality to the study of space and place in NT research. Robbins (1991a, 211), in his early application of critical spatiality, appeals to a social-scientific model developed by Robert Sack (1983). In his investigation into the social location of the implied author of Luke-Acts, Robbins (1991a, 211) employs critical spatiality in his analysis of the implied perception of the natural environment (geographical space). Further examples of the application of critical spatiality for NT interpretation are to be found in the work of Moxnes (2003) and Neyrey (2003). Moxnes explores the gospel portrayal of Jesus’ ministry in the context of house and household and the envisaged kingdom of God. Moxnes (2003, 72–90) even uses queer

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<sup>40</sup> See Berquist & Camp (2008), George (2013), Økland, De Vos & Wenell (2016) and Prinsloo & Maier (2013) for collections in the field of critical spatiality theory. Flanagan (1999) has played an important role in the introduction of critical spatiality theory to the field of biblical studies.

theory to explore space implied, for example, in the saying of Jesus in Matt 19:12 concerning those who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Neyrey (2003) applies spatiality thinking in an article on public and private space in the life and ministry of Jesus according to Matthew's Gospel, and Paul in the Book of Acts.

Robbins, in his development of SRI, has used first-, second- and thirdspace thinking in a greatly simplified and idealised way. He has adapted the concepts to suit his own ends as the primary means of identifying the use of rhetorolects in the NT. Guided by Soja (1996, 6), he has come to understand thirdspace as a space of mental blending. He locates thirdspace conceptualisation in the utilisation of rhetorolects to envisage the possibility of transformed life, behaviour, and attitudes in the lives of believers (Robbins, 2009, 77–120). Robbins (2009, xxix) refers to thirdspace as the mental space in which “people negotiate their daily lives in ongoing contexts of sensory-aesthetic experiences”, a “dynamic space in which readers, interpreters, and writers negotiate possible alternative identities on a daily basis in relation to firstspaces and secondspaces.”

Cognitive science and critical spatiality theory have thus helped Robbins (2009, 107) to develop these cognitive blending insights into an ICM for SRI. He holds that firstspace knowledge results from mental images of sensory-aesthetic experiences of social spaces from daily life in the “household, village, city, synagogue, kingdom, temple, and empire” (Robbins, 2009, 108). Secondspace knowledge results from the cognitive and conceptual interpretation of such social spaces as cultural, religious and ideological spaces. Robbins then envisions a process of metaphorical reasoning that involves a blending of firstspace experiential knowledge and secondspace conceptualisation into a thirdspace in which attitude, lifestyle and relationships are transformed. These “spaces of blending” empower people to “negotiate their daily lives in ongoing contexts of sensory-aesthetic experiences” (Robbins, 2009, 108). Robbins (2007a, 166–170; 2009, 110–112; 2010b, 201–202; 2016a, 88–98) provides helpful examples of possible ways in which blending takes place in the employment of rhetorolects in texts. Conceptual blending theory has played an important role in the development of the full-bodied approach of SRI.<sup>41</sup> Guided by conceptual metaphor theory and the empirical findings of cognitive science, it also directs the

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<sup>41</sup> See the work of Fauconnier and Turner (2002) for a detailed presentation of conceptual blending phenomena, and Todd V. Oakley (2011) for a discourse-analytic and rhetorical approach to the subject. See Robbins (2007a) for an understanding of the value of conceptual blending theory (sometimes referred to as conceptual integration theory) for SRI.

arguments of my thesis. I will seek to demonstrate that Luke blends various rhetorolects to develop and set up his juxtaposing and interweaving of the two infancy narratives (see Robbins, 2009, 8; 2010b, 192).

### 2.2.9.3 The rhetorolects and the concept of *topos/topoi*

The various dominant modes of early Christian discourse identified by Robbins as six rhetorolects are closely related to the concept of *topos* in classical Greek rhetoric. Robbins defines a *topos* as follows:

A place to which an arguer, problem solver, or thinker may mentally go to find arguments. Thus, *topoi* themselves evoke a constellation of networks of meanings as a result of social, cultural, or ideological use. A *topos* contains a pictorial dimension, which SRI calls its rhetography, and an argumentative dimension, which SRI calls its rhetology. (Robbins, 2009, xxix)

David Bradley (1953, 240–244), in his seminal work on Paul’s use of *topoi*, has argued that Paul uses self-contained units of argumentation dealing with a range of subjects, including money, parents, sex and food. In his critique of Bradley’s work, Mullins (1980, 545) takes issue with Bradley (1953, 246) who is of the view that Paul used a “bag of answers to meet recurring problems and questions common to the members of different early Christian communities.” Mullins (1980, 545) argues, rather, that the *topoi* used by Paul are not “simply the written-out versions of pat answers which were delivered often and in the same way each time.” He holds, instead, that Paul’s *topoi* supply “a set of conditions which [measure] the adequacy of the answers which the user made to common questions” (Mullins, 1980, 546). The function of the *topoi* in Paul’s writings, in the view of Mullins (1980, 547), is thus to “urge a certain type of behavior or attitude and there [is] no limit to the range of behavior discussed.” This insight moves the conversation towards a clearer understanding of the function of thirdspace thinking in the use of rhetorolects.

Bloomquist (2016, 176) has strongly advocated for the importance of *topoi* in SRI. As Roy Jeal (2005, 689) reminds his readers, “Topics (*topoi*) within the textures and rhetorolects are elaborated by pictorial narration referred to as ‘rhetography,’ and by argumentation called ‘rhetology.’” According to Barbara Warnick (2000, 110), in her work on *topoi* in Aristotle’s rhetoric, it is important for practitioners of rhetorical analysis and interpretation to understand that, “[o]nce a topical pattern has developed into common use, it will be used over and over in various manifestations and will be effective by virtue of its recognizability.”

### 2.2.10 The rhetorolects as modes of discourse

The rhetorolects developed and took root in this way in early Christian thinking and communication, similar to the development of the *topoi*. Robbins (2009, 115) points out that “early Christians used well-known concepts, tradition, and stories ‘with a Jewish cast’ to communicate their patterns of belief, action, and worldview in the Mediterranean world.” Robbins (2008a, 2) holds that six major rhetorolects were used to develop early Christian discourse, thereby giving shape to six story-lines that began to constitute Christian belief in the early centuries of the Christian era. “Each storyline worked with selective ‘resource zones’ from the Hebrew Bible for beginning and succeeding events that flowed into the ongoing story of Jesus and his followers” (Robbins, 2008a). He argues that early Christian discourse drew on different episodes from the biblical story as “special points of relationship to the ‘Christian belief-story’ they were presenting” (Robbins, 2008a, 6, note 7). I will now outline in greater detail each of the five rhetorolects that feature in my thesis: prophetic, apocalyptic, miracle, wisdom and priestly rhetorolects.<sup>42</sup>

#### 2.2.10.1 Prophetic rhetorolect

Robbins (2009, xxvii, 110, 219–328) holds that prophetic rhetorolect uses words that conjure up in the mind of a reader images of a political kingdom in which God uses prophets who are authorised, called, informed and commanded to confront and challenge the leaders and other residents of the imagined kingdom, calling them to live according to God’s just and righteous standards. These images evoke reasoning and thinking that utilise deliberative prophetic discourse (Robbins, 2016a, 289). The underlying principles for the use of prophetic discourse are twofold: (1) God chooses people to take responsibility for righteousness and, (2) if they fulfil this calling, they will be blessed, and if they do not, they will be punished (Combrink, 2002; Robbins, 2002, 45). The prophetic discourse of the literature of early Christianity blended experiences of a territory ruled over by a king and the message and actions of prophets (firstspace conceptualisation) with the mental image of God’s kingdom (secondspace conceptualisation) (Robbins, 2004a, 35). The blended prophetic rhetorolect challenges and confronts religious and political leaders who have been ensnared by pride, greed and power, calling them to pursue God’s justice, righteousness and mercy as a manifestation of God’s rule here on earth (thirdspace

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<sup>42</sup> Robbins (2009, 7) also suggests the use of precreation rhetorolect, but it is not prominent in Luke’s infancy narratives. It is, therefore, not included in this description.

conceptualisation in what Robbins calls “the space of blending”) (Robbins, 2009, xxix, 109–110; 2010b, 201).

In chapters 3 and 4, I will highlight aspects of prophetic rhetorolect in Luke’s accounts of the annunciation and birth of John and of Jesus.

### **2.2.10.2      Apocalyptic rhetorolect**

Robbins (2009, xxi, 109) explains that apocalyptic rhetorolect uses words that conjure up memories of the experience of living under the rule of the emperor, exercised and enforced through the imperial army (firstspace conceptualisation). These memories lead to images of God in a heavenly temple city, filled with holy and heavenly beings (secondspace conceptualisation). Judicial reasoning then leads to an understanding of God acting in judgement against evil, and of evil being destroyed. The blended goal of apocalyptic rhetorology is the creation of a peaceful, restored universal realm where the righteous and holy God is eternally present. It thus calls people to holy thoughts and actions (thirdspace conceptualisation) (Robbins, 2009, xxi, 109). Bloomquist (2002b, 45), understands apocalyptic discourse to be that which “reconfigures our perception of all regions of time and space, in the world and in the body, in the light of the conviction that God will intervene to judge at some time in the future.”

Wanamaker (2002, 134) has reminded us that the apocalyptic genre includes a wide range of *topoi*. Not all of the *topoi* are specifically eschatological, and not all are to be found in texts that can be classed as apocalypses. Greg Carey (2012, 6–10) has suggested a constellation of eleven possible apocalyptic *topoi* that are likely to manifest in different configurations in apocalyptic discourse. Not all of Carey’s categories are relevant here. The following topics feature in Luke’s infancy narratives and are considered in chapters 3 and 4: (1) an interest in an alternative world; (2) encounters with heavenly intermediaries; (3) experience of visions and/or auditions; and (4) a deterministic understanding of the course of history. This range of topics gives us a sense of the nature and shape of apocalyptic rhetorolect as Luke might use it in the development of his portrayal of the power relationship between John and Jesus (see the discussion of Bloomquist, 2002b, 46).

In chapters 3 and 4, I explore the role played by apocalyptic rhetorolect in Luke’s infancy narratives.

### 2.2.10.3 Miracle rhetorolect

Miracle rhetorolect uses words that bring to mind images of sick and malfunctioning bodies being miraculously healed through the bodily presence of a person acting as an agent of God's power. Miracle rhetorolect originates from a "space of relation" between a malfunctioning body (firstspace conceptualisation) and the idea of God as Divine Healer, often using a human agent as a chosen channel of transformative power (secondspace conceptualisation). The blended goal of miracle rhetoric is a human body miraculously healed and transformed (thirdspace conceptualisation) (Robbins, 2009, xxiv–xxv, 109, 111). Miracle rhetorolect addresses and declares "unusual enactment of the power of God in the created realm of the universe", and such unusual enactment of God's power is focussed on human bodies in the Synoptic Gospels (Robbins, 2005, 2). This understanding presupposes that "God responds to humans in contexts of danger or disease and that Jesus is the mediator of these benefits to humans" (Robbins, 2007b, 358).

Robbins's understanding of miracle discourse is supported by the collection of Jewish, Graeco-Roman and early Christian miracle stories assembled by Wendy Cotter (1999). Her purpose was to establish a resource to aid the interpretation of NT miracle stories within their first century Mediterranean literary context. David A. DeSilva (2012, 199) points out that nearly all the stories in Cotter's collection fit Robbins' description of miracle rhetorolect, the only exceptions being those that tell of people walking on water and displaying supernatural power over the elements. He concludes that early Christians are likely to have read NT miracle discourse in the literary context of such Graeco-Roman miracle accounts. In his SRI analysis of miracle discourse in the Book of Revelation, DeSilva (2012, 198) explores the possibility of broadening the definition of miracle discourse to include God's supernatural cosmic acts described throughout the Book of Revelation. In each case his analysis leads him to conclude that the text most often manifests apocalyptic discourse and, on occasion, suffering-death discourse. Watson (2012) and Bloomquist (2012) have considered the role of argumentation in the miracle stories of Luke-Acts, and Cotter (2012) and Davina Lopez (2012) have offered a critique of SRI-orientated approaches to miracle discourse in the NT.

In chapters 3 and 4, I consider the use of miracle rhetorolect in the infancy narratives of John and Jesus, especially in respect of Elizabeth's and Mary's pregnancies.

#### **2.2.10.4 Wisdom rhetorolect**

In wisdom rhetorolect, an author may use words that call to mind images of actual households remembered from personal experience in the geophysical world. The image may involve parents teaching practical wisdom to their children, or teachers guiding children into ways of adult wisdom (firstspace thinking). These images evoked in the minds of the early Christian readers the type of logic that uses wisdom rhetorolect, leading to the conceptualisation of God as a heavenly Father-Creator, of God as Wisdom or Mediator, or of Jesus as God's Son, and people as children of God (secondspace thinking). The blended goal of wisdom rhetorolect is the formation of renewed people who will be able to bring forth "good, righteous action, thought, will, and speech" (thirdspace thinking) (Robbins, 2009, 109–110). Jeal (2015, 7) holds that wisdom discourse in the NT deals with the "lives early Christians were called to live in their ancient Mediterranean social, cultural, and religious world." He understands that, as wisdom discourse developed in early Christian rhetoric, it drew from various languages and expressions of rhetoric and ideologies. The Old Testament and other Jewish discourses provide a valuable source, as did the Mediterranean realm of thinking (Jeal, 2015, 7).

In chapter 3, I will discuss the presence of wisdom rhetorolect in Luke's infancy narratives, for example, the reference to John turning many people of Israel back to God in Luke 1:16, and the reference to him turning the hearts of parents to their children and disobedient people back to righteousness (Luke 1:16–17).

#### **2.2.10.5 Priestly rhetorolect**

Priestly rhetorolect draws on memories of experiences in places of worship involving "[a]ltars, temples, priests, worship assemblies, and temple city" (firstspace thinking) (Robbins, 2015b, 18). It calls to mind images of priests serving at the altar (Robbins, 2015b, 18). This led to the conceptualisation of the holy and pure God on a priestly throne in the heavenly temple, and of people as God's priestly community, or of Jesus as God's Priest-Messiah (secondspace thinking). The blending of these mental spaces evokes skilful rhetorical reasoning regarding priestly activities, envisaging a community of people willing to make sacrifices in life in the hope of receiving God's redemption (thirdspace thinking) (Robbins, 2009, 109, 112; 2015b, 18).

In his SRI analysis of priestly discourse in the Letter to the Hebrews, DeSilva (2006) provides insight into possible points of connection between rhetorical textures and rhetorolects. He demonstrates how the author of Hebrews, for example, draws on

intertexture with the Jewish Scriptures as a primary source for evoking priestly discourse as he “reconfigures the ‘storyline’ of priestly discourse in the Jewish Scriptures” and as he “selects – and deselects – elements of that story” (DeSilva, 2006, 296).

In terms of major resource zones for the priestly story-line in early Christian discourse, my analysis of Luke’s infancy narratives will seek to show how Luke uses oral-scribal intertexture with the Jewish Scriptures to evoke priestly rhetorolect in the opening texture of his narrative of the birth of John, and in the closing texture of his narrative of the birth of Jesus.

### **2.2.11 Concluding comments**

SRI proves to be a valuable tool for taking seriously the complexity of Luke’s infancy narratives. Robbins summarises its valuable interdisciplinary potential as follows:

In a context where historical criticism has been opening its boundaries to social and cultural data and literary criticism has been opening boundaries to ideology, sociorhetorical criticism practices interdisciplinary exegesis that reinvents the traditional steps of analysis and redraws the traditional boundaries of interpretation. Sociorhetorical criticism, then, is an exegetically oriented approach that gathers current practices of interpretation together in an interdisciplinary paradigm. (Robbins, 2016b, 29)

What SRI is not attempting to do is to determine the “correct” or “orthodox” reading of a text. Rather, it seeks to explore the various textures, rhetorolects and *topoi* in conversation with each another. In similar vein, Clivaz (2011, 161–186) has proposed the possibility of a multivalent reading of Luke 1:35, which attempts to move beyond conceptions of orthodoxy or proto-orthodoxy in its interpretation. SRI is well-suited to such ends and I have selected to use it in my analysis of Luke’s infancy narratives. However, before applying the relevant elements of SRI it will be helpful to begin with an analysis of opening-middle-closing texture and its impact on the structure of Luke’s text.

## **2.3 CONTRIBUTION OF MY THESIS**

The contribution of my thesis lies, then, in the use of SRI to argue that Luke uses rhetorical strategies, including inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, and sacred texture, to ascribe honour to John and Jesus in such a way as to reinforce an emerging asymmetrical honour and power relationship between the two. In this regard, Luke’s infancy narratives manifest ideological texture. I will argue by means of my SRI analysis, that this ideological texture is fundamental to a comprehensive understanding of what Luke is doing rhetorically in these narratives.

My analysis of opening-middle-closing texture has emphasised the juxtaposition of Luke’s narratives. It provides the organising framework for the rest of my thesis. I will use the greater area of my analysis space to discuss the annunciation accounts of John and Jesus. These texts show a high level of rhetorical complexity, particularly in respect of intertextual echoes of texts from the Jewish Scriptures, and cultural intertexture with the OTP and DSS.

## 2.4 CONCLUSION

I begin in chapter 3 by addressing the narrative units listed on the left-hand side of the table in figure 4, dealing with the annunciation and birth of John. Chapter 4 then focuses on the passages on the right-hand side of the table, dealing with the annunciation and birth of Jesus. My analysis of these infancy narratives includes an analysis of the ideological texture.

In my thesis I make the argument that Luke employs a rhetorical tapestry of a variety of modes of discourse to develop the ideological texture of his infancy narratives. The following two-dimensional matrix in figure 6 depicts the rhetorical textures and rhetorolects that are identified in my analysis as featuring prominently.<sup>43</sup> The matrix shows the variety of possible elements of intersection between rhetorical textures and rhetorical dialects.

**Six rhetorical modes of discourse (rhetorolects)**

	<b>Prophetic rhetorolect</b>	<b>Apocalyptic rhetorolect</b>	<b>Wisdom rhetorolect</b>	<b>Pre-creation rhetorolect</b>	<b>Priestly rhetorolect</b>	<b>Miracle rhetorolect</b>
<b>Six textures of rhetoric</b>	<b>Inner texture</b>					
	<b>Inter-texture</b>					
	<b>Social - cultural texture</b>					
	<b>Sacred texture</b>					
	<b>Ideological texture</b>					

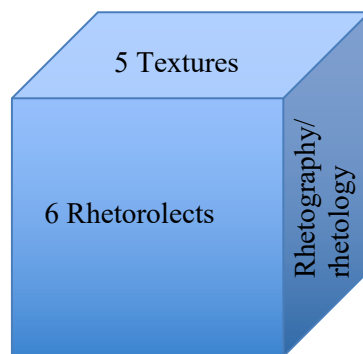
**Figure 6: Graphic illustration of rhetorolects and socio-rhetorical textures**

In fact, what is needed is a multi-dimensional model depicting the various aspects of texts under consideration to illustrate the complexity of SRI. At this stage, led by the pioneering

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<sup>43</sup> By leaving the pre-creation column un-shaded, the matrix reflects the fact that pre-creation rhetorolect is largely absent from Luke’s infancy narratives.

work of Vernon Robbins, the range of aspects considered includes the five rhetorical textures, six rhetorolects, incorporating critical spatial theory, and the rhetography/rhetology of texts. All three of the current aspects are reflected in the cubic model depicted in figure 7 below. Other potential aspects yet to be recognised by Robbins and other SRI practitioners will no doubt later be added to the sides of the model yet invisible from current perspectives. Perhaps the analysis of visual texture undertaken by Canavan (2012, 2015a, 2015b) can already be considered a further dimension of textual texture, separate from but at times intersecting with rhetography.



**Figure 7: Multi-dimensional depiction of the various aspects of SRI**

The SRI strategy outlined above provides parameters and controls to facilitate a responsible interpretive process. SRI's interpretive power lies in the way it enables the dialogical consideration of a number of different interpretive strategies. By employing such a range of critical strategies, the application of SRI enables a multidimensional consideration of the variety of rhetorical textures present in Luke's infancy narratives. I turn now to Luke's portrayal of the birth of John in an attempt to demonstrate his ascription of honour to John as God's prophet, called to prepare the way for Jesus as the one who is to surpass him in greatness.

## Chapter 3

### John, the great prophet, is born

At the end of chapter 2 above, I presented the findings of my analysis of the opening-middle-closing texture of the infancy narratives of John and Jesus. The exercise enabled a tabulation of the manifesting juxtaposition of the two infancy narratives. Using the range of SRI analytical categories described in chapter 2, in the following two chapters I will explore the various rhetorical strategies used by Luke to develop the rhetography and rhetology of these narratives. My primary concern is with the final form of Luke's text rather than with a source critical search for possible origins of traditions reflected in his narrative. It will become clear in the course of my analysis that Luke employs visual texture in the rhetography of his text, appealing to the imagination of his readers. He also develops the rhetology of the text, predominantly through the use of argumentative enthymemes making up the argumentative inner and progressive texture of the storyline. As has already begun to emerge, Luke uses opening-middle-closing inner texture to develop his storyline.

In the prologue (1:1–4), Luke's Gospel is introduced.<sup>44</sup> The prologue contains hints and subtle references to important themes and key emphases that feature in the rest of Luke-Acts. Luke declares to Theophilus that his purpose is that he ought to be reassured (*ἐπιγνώσῃς*) concerning the reliability of the things he has heard (1:4), by implication, about Jesus.<sup>45</sup> This casts important light on Luke's purpose for telling the stories of John's and Jesus' births. By stating that his goal in writing his gospel is to establish the reliability of the things that Theophilus has heard, Luke indicates his intension to help his readers to see, know, understand, realise, remember and consider the truth and reliability of his account. This is communication in the zone of emotion-fused thought, intended to appeal to the emotions and imagination of his readers. Luke's stated purpose will be kept in mind in the following exploration of the rhetorical strategies used to develop his rhetography and rhetology.

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<sup>44</sup> In § 1.3 I have noted that the prologue suggests that Theophilus is a benefactor to Luke and, if this is the case, there is the possibility of an interpersonal power relationship at play. This in turn hints at the potential value to be gained from the analysis of ideological texture in Luke's infancy narratives (see Robbins, 2004b, 1–6).

<sup>45</sup> Some have suggested that the name Theophilus is symbolic, since etymologically it means "friend of God" (Nolland 1989, 10). In that case the document is addressed generally to believers. For a contrary view, see Green (1997, 44).

Immediately following the prologue, narrative unit 1 gives an account of Zechariah's angelic visitation and the annunciation of John in 1:5–25. The central point of this narrative unit is that Zechariah is greatly honoured by the angelic visit. He has been ascribed honour by being selected by lot to be the serving priest on duty in the confines of the sacred temple space at the altar of incense in the Holy Place, in close proximity to the Holy of Holies, at the time of the angelic visitation. The opening-middle-closing texture of the passage is expressed in the structure of the narrative unit: the opening texture can be identified in 1:5–7, the middle texture in 1:8–23, and the closing texture in 1:24–25. The short opening texture sets the scene in 1:5–7. The longer middle texture tells the story of Gabriel's visit to Zechariah in 1:8–23, ending with an overview of the resultant events in 1:21–23. These three verses describe the surprised reaction of the assembly of people praying in the temple courtyard, waiting for Zechariah to exit. The closing texture in 1:24–25 tells of the fulfilment of the angel's promise: Zechariah's wife conceives as promised in 1:24, and the annunciation account climaxes with Elizabeth's doxological response to God in 1:25.

Parsons (2015, 35) sees the annunciation scene as constituting the essential elements of a typical dream-vision in Luke-Acts. He notes the following details associated with dream-visions: (1) the scene is set (1:5–10); (2) terminology is used that is often found in accounts of dream-visions concerning the appearance of an angel of the Lord (1:11a); (3) the actual dream-vision is described (1:11b–20), and (4) the response or reaction to the angel's message is given (1:21–25) (Parsons, 2015, 33).<sup>46</sup> Angelic visitations and miraculous events are a prominent feature in the repetitive texture of Luke 1 and 2 (1:11–20, 26–38; 2:8–20). Various forms of supernatural visitation also occur at other points in Luke-Acts.<sup>47</sup>

In this chapter I consider narrative units 1, 4 and 5, which deal with the birth narrative of John. In spite of the fact that figure 4 reflects narrative unit 5 ahead of unit 4 in order to emphasise its juxtaposition with unit 3, I will deal with the units sequentially. Narrative units 2, 3, 6, 7 and 8 reflected on the right-hand side of figure 4, will be addressed in chapter 4. Some textual units are rhetorically more complex than others and play a more vital role in the overall development of the rhetology of Luke's narrative. This leads to more fruitful SRI analysis of these units of text. As I will seek to show in this and the following chapters,

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<sup>46</sup> See Dodson (2009, 59 and 171, and note his observation that not all these elements are always present); J. S. Hanson (1980, 1400–1413); and also Parsons (2008, 129–130, 144–145, 228, 317, who identifies a similar presence of dream-vision elements in Acts 9:10–17a, 10:9–17a, 16:6–10, 18:9–11).

<sup>47</sup> See Luke 3:21–22; 9:28–36; 22:43–44; Acts 1:10–11; 9:3–9, 10–17; 10:3–6, 9–16; 12:7–11.

Luke's rhetorical strategies form the building blocks of the ideological texture that emerges in the progressive texture of the infancy narratives. Of particular interest will be the question as to why Luke, who, as I will seek to show, ultimately demonstrates the superiority of Jesus's honour over and against that of John, begins his narrative with the annunciation of John's birth. My argument will essentially be that Luke does so for rhetorical reasons to address past or present followers of John who have a high view of John but are now being encouraged to transfer their allegiance to Jesus as the Messiah for whom John prepares the way.

### **3.1 PROPHETIC DISCOURSE AND SOCIAL ARGUMENTATION IN JOHN'S INFANCY NARRATIVE**

As I argue in the analysis that follows, the discourse of Luke's narrative of John's birth predominantly employs prophetic discourse, along with a lesser blend of elements of apocalyptic and wisdom discourse, against the backdrop of priestly rhetorlect created in the opening texture of narrative unit 1. This blend of rhetorlects employed by Luke in the narrative of John's annunciation shows that John's important role is to be that of a great prophet whose life will be marked by the presence of the Holy Spirit. He will "turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God" (Luke 1:16b). Like Elijah before him, his function will be to go before the Lord "to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (1:17). The annunciation of the angel implies that John's mission will be to change many amongst the people of Israel by bringing them back into a right relationship with the Lord their God. He is to be instrumental in converting those who have heretofore been "disobedient" so that they will henceforth embrace "the wisdom of the righteous" (1:17). This theme is picked up again in Zechariah's *Benedictus* where John's father declares prophetically to his new-born son: "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins" (1:76-77).

#### **3.1.1 Social location of the characters and implied audience of the birth narrative of John**

The discussion in § 1.3 in respect of the social location of the implied author and implied audience of Luke's Gospel suggests a Jewish Christian author writing to fellow-members of the Jesus movement. If the adequacy of the description of Luke's primary implied audience as a community of Jesus-followers can be assumed, would it also be true specifically for the

implied audience of his narrative of the birth of John? This is an aspect that calls for careful consideration at the outset because it can potentially assist in a detailed SRI analysis of the infancy narratives, both here in respect of John's infancy narrative, and in chapter 4 in respect of Jesus. The nature of the social rhetoric of Luke's narrative of John's infancy will now be considered and classified in terms of the most applicable category from Robbins's (1975, 147–150) taxonomy of different religious discourses, which he based on his adaptation of Wilson's identified sociological responses to the world (1963, 51–55; and see also 1969 and 1973).

### **3.1.2 Social location of characters in the narrative of John's birth**

Zechariah is shown by Luke to be a member of the priestly class. He has the honour of being "chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and offer incense" (Luke 1:9). Luke goes into detail, spelling out the ancestral connections of Zechariah and Elizabeth. Zechariah is described as belonging to the priestly order of Abijah (1:5), who lives in "a Judean town in the hill country" (Luke 1:39). The Chronicler (1 Chr 24:7–18) tells of the establishment of 24 priestly divisions, of which Abijah was the eighth order. There is no reference until post-biblical times of such a service roster for the priestly orders (see Hollenbach, 1979, 852–855). According to the Mishnah (Ta'anit 4:2), it was common practice for priests and Levites to reside in surrounding towns and cities and only to go up to Jerusalem when their "mishmarah" was on duty. In the world of the real author, Luke's descriptions of Zechariah, when considered in the light of the Mishnah reference, suggests a social-location for Zechariah as a member of a less important priestly family living in a village in Judea. Nevertheless, the description of Zechariah being chosen by lot to enter the temple sanctuary, by implication, being sovereignly appointed by God for the task, ascribes to Zechariah and Elizabeth a high degree of honour in the world of the text. By implication, their son, John is also included in this ascribed honour.

### **3.1.3 Social location of the implied audience of the narrative of John's birth**

As discussed in § 2.2.6, Robbins's (1975, 147–150) taxonomy of seven religious discourses, adapted from Wilson's (1963, 51–55) description of sociological responses to the world, is a useful tool for analysing the social argumentation of Luke's narrative of John's birth. In Luke 1:16–17, 77, we read that John's future role as prophet will involve *turning*, and *making ready* God's people, giving "knowledge of salvation . . . by the forgiveness of their sins." The implication of the social rhetoric of these promises fits almost seamlessly into Robbins's description of conversionist argumentation (that which argues that the outside world is

corrupt and that it is inhabited by corrupt humans). Wilson (1963, 52) describes conversionist groups as those in which their “jugement sur les hommes et les événements tend à être moralisateur, parce que l'on croit que les hommes sont entièrement responsables de leurs actions.” The conversionist rhetoric, used by Luke to describe John’s future ministry, states that his role will be to challenge and to transform the corruption of the people of Israel. This emphasis on the prophetic nature of John’s ministry reoccurs in Luke 3:3, in the account of the beginning of John’s public ministry, described as the proclamation of “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins”.

The rhetoric of John’s birth narrative cannot easily be described as revolutionist, introversionist, gnostic-manipulationist, thaumaturgical, reformist, or utopian (see § 2.2.6 for definitions, and see Robbins, 1996a, 147–150). Rather, the discourse implies an understanding of the world as corrupted. It expresses the conviction that John’s unique role will be to facilitate a transformation of human hearts and lives that will bring about a transformation of the nation of Israel, and of its relationship with God. I would argue from these observations that the implied author has a conversionist community in mind as he constructs John’s infancy narrative, and as this narrative is juxtaposed with that of the birth of Jesus.<sup>48</sup>

### **3.2 OPENING TEXTURE: INTRODUCTION OF CHARACTERS (LUKE 1:5–7)**

Luke begins his account of the annunciation of John by introducing two central voices, using a brief genealogy (1:5–7). Nolland (1989, 11, 17, 25) points out that 1:5 marks a shift in tone, from the secularity of the prologue to the emphasis on Jewish piety evident in the opening texture of this unit. The historical time frame, and sacred context of the middle texture that follows, are established for the world of the text.

In terms of inner texture, Luke employs narrational texture, expressed in the voice of the narrator, used to communicate important background information regarding two central characters of this narrative unit. These three verses also comprise the opening texture of narrative unit 1 (see my analysis in § 2.2.4.1). In the implied argumentative texture of these verses, Luke is laying an important narrational foundation in preparation for key aspects of his narrative that become clearer in the progressive texture, primarily in the ascription of

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<sup>48</sup> In chapter 4, in similar fashion, I explore the social location of the audience implied by Luke’s birth and infancy narrative of Jesus.

honour to John's parents and, by implication, to John. The importance of this move becomes clear as the progressive texture of the narrative unfolds.

### 3.2.1 Modes of discourse

As Luke launches into his characterisation of Zechariah and Elizabeth,<sup>49</sup> the omniscient narrator informs the implied reader that Zechariah is a priest in the order of Abijah (1:5a).<sup>50</sup> A subtle element of rhetography underlies this reference to Zechariah being a priest because of the close association of priests with the Jerusalem temple, immediately bringing an image of the temple to mind, preparing the way for the greater detail in this regard that follows in the middle-texture. The name "Zechariah" is used seven times in 1 and 2 Chronicles in respect of a priest or Levite (Brown, 1979, 258), and Luke introduces an element of oral-scribal intertexture by means of this implied heritage. These verses engage readers and make the characters of Zechariah and Elizabeth believable. Luke appeals to the imagination in his description of the elderly, pious priestly couple who lead righteous and blameless lives, full of faith in God and blameless in their obedience to God's laws. Their barrenness also introduces sensory-aesthetic texture that stimulates a degree of sympathy for this special couple, barren in spite of their faithfulness to God.

As Syiemlieh (2005, 71) has pointed out, "[Luke-Acts] is deeply embedded in the broader cultural currents of the eastern Mediterranean world. And the spatio-temporal setting of the narrative world of Luke-Acts is also the world of first century Palestine, which was part of the eastern Mediterranean world." Having established Zechariah's priestly credentials, his wife Elizabeth is described as a descendant of Aaron (1:5b), and Elizabeth was also the name of Aaron's wife (see Exod 6:23). Luke thus emphasises John's priestly lineage and locates John's social position and heritage in the priestly world of the Jewish Scriptures, rooted in Israel's heritage. The social and cultural texture of these verses is also important for Luke's characterisation of Zechariah and Elizabeth (see § 3.1 below).

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<sup>49</sup> See the helpful discussion of the process of characterisation in ancient literature in Syiemlieh (2005, 50–70).

<sup>50</sup> In the HB, 1 Chr 24:10 lists אֲבִיָּה (LXX: Αβιά) as the eighth of the 24 grandsons of Aaron appointed to head up priestly orders, rendered Αβιά in the GNT.

### 3.2.1.1 Priestly discourse provides foundational rhetorology

An element of repetitive texture evident in Luke's references to the concept *δικαιοσύνη* suggests that sacred texture is also being used to enhance what the references to priests suggests to be a firstspace expression of priestly rhetorology. Having described Zechariah and Elizabeth as righteous (1:6), Luke goes on in 1:17 to state that the son promised to them will have the role of turning the hearts of God's people away from disobedience to the wisdom of the righteous (*δικαίων* – 1:17). This repetitive texture enhances the sequential flow of Luke's narrative, while at the same time preparing for his later celebration of John's future prophetic ministry in the *Benedictus* in 1:76–79, especially the prophecy that John would be called the *προφήτης ὑψίστου* and would go before the Lord *ἐτοιμάσαι ὁδὸς αὐτοῦ*. John's ministry is later summarised as proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. This section of Luke's narrative of John's birth also evidences repetitive texture involving a word for child (*τέκνον* – 1:7 and 17). This righteous priestly couple were barren and only now in these days, as a result of the miraculous intervention of God, had the angel promised that God would bless and use their offspring to impact the lives of other children along with their families for the well-being of all, leading them to righteousness and purity.

The lives of Zechariah and Elizabeth manifest the ideal purity required of a chosen member of the priestly community serving in God's holy space (secondspace conceptualisation). The narrative also seems to take for granted that, as God's chosen priest serving in the temple, Zechariah understands the divinely ordained reality of his priestly function as activating "special benefits for humans from God" (thirdspace priestly conceptualisation). However, when the angel appears to him, Zechariah fails to grasp the possibility of receiving an actual benefit dispensed by God via Gabriel. He responds in disbelief, unable to accept the promise of Elizabeth's pregnancy. Ironically, in spite of Zechariah's disbelief, God's promises are fulfilled. Zechariah's son is destined to go before the Lord, the one who, according to Zechariah later in 1:69–71 of the *Benedictus*, is to be a horn of salvation, one raised up by God to effect redemption (see Robbins, 2009, xxvi). The social and cultural categories implied in respect of the social location of John and his family (see § 3.1.1 below), imply readers who are familiar with key aspects of the religious and cultural heritage of Jewish temple worship and priestly practice. The implied rhetorology of the narrative ascribes honour to John and lends weight to his role as forerunner and herald of the Lord, as eventually becomes clear in the overall progressive texture of the two interwoven and juxtaposed infancy narratives.

Furthermore, while John is never specifically referred to as “anointed” in Luke’s writings, the close connection between John as God’s prophetic herald and of the Lord calls to mind the royal and priestly messiahs of Qumran, which may have been derived from the messianic prophecy in Zech 4:14 (וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵה שְׁנֵי בְנֵי־הַיְצְהָר הָעֹמְדִים עַל־אֲדוֹן כָּל־הָאָרֶץ). The similarities between the priestly and prophetic figure of Zechariah in the Jewish Scriptures and the priestly and prophetic figures of Zechariah and John in Luke’s Gospel (see Luke 1:5) suggest the possibility of Luke’s portrayal of Zechariah being modelled on the figure of Zechariah of the Jewish Scriptures. It highlights the striking intertexture between the two characters and the two contexts by means of the resulting echo. This echo from the Jewish Scriptures again roots John deeply in the faith traditions of Israel, and hints at the presence of prophetic rhetorolect. This priestly rhetorolect grounds John’s later ministry in both the prophetic and priestly heritage of ancient Israel.

These features lend rhetorical force to Luke’s depiction of John’s character and role, and contribute to elements of complexity in the narrative. Not only is John’s father Zechariah a priest (1:5) who prophesies (1:67), but also his mother Elizabeth is of priestly descent. However, she will also later manifest prophetic insight in 1:43 when she acknowledges Mary to be *ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ κυρίου μου*. As becomes clear later in Luke’s Gospel, John, a priest by birth, is destined to become an oracular prophet (see Luke 3:1–22). In the context of the honour-shame society of the ancient Mediterranean world, the text implies an audience that understands his references to John’s priestly ancestry as appropriate ascriptions of honour in view of this destiny. As pointed out in §§ 1.2 and 2.2.6.2, in the context of antiquity, honour is a key determinant of social power, and as Wanamaker (2003, 196) has observed, ideology is concerned with the “maintenance and reproduction of social power.” These observations are key to my analysis of the infancy narratives of John and Jesus.

This ascription of honour and social power to John is a key ingredient of the social and cultural texture of Luke’s rhetoric. As my discussion of the social location of the implied audience of John’s birth narrative in § 3.2.1 above seeks to show, the text implies the inclusion of a particular group or sect as audience. It would appear that the implied author intends to win their trust and confidence.

The narrative also assumes honourable kinship heritage undergirding the world of the text, finding expression in Luke’s emphasis on Zechariah’s and Elizabeth’s ancestry. Again, honour is being ascribed to John. I will highlight below, the importance of this ascribed honour in terms of the role it plays in the development of ideological texture in the narrative.

In the context of an implied audience that understands the honour-shame implications of these *topoi*, in the world of the text, Elizabeth’s barrenness would have been regarded as a social disgrace in Luke’s world. According to H.F Rooy (1986, 225), a “person without children was . . . regarded as being less than a complete human being”. In her cultural-narrative analysis of the barrenness narratives of the HB, Janice De-Whyte (2018, 24) shows that fertility provided a source of power for women in the Ancient Near East. Conversely, because motherhood was understood to be the epitome of womanhood, infertility was viewed negatively. Also, for readers with insight into Jewish traditions, several texts from the Jewish Scripture would have contributed to an understanding of barrenness either as a manifestation of divine action (see Gen 16; 29:31–30:24 and 1 Sam 1:1–20), or as divine punishment (see Lev 20:20–21 and 2 Sam 6:12–23). Awareness of such Hebrew social and cultural values would have highlighted for Luke’s readers the fact that, by stating that the couple are *δίκαιοι . . . ἐναντίον τοῦ θεοῦ* (1:6a), Luke appears to be stressing that, in the case of Elizabeth, her barrenness is not the result of God’s punishment for sin committed by her and her husband. As Nolland (1989, 27) points out, barrenness was not normally expected to be the fate of the righteous (see Lev 20:20–21). Luke’s description of the righteousness of Zechariah and Elizabeth implies that Luke is preempting assumptions that might have come naturally to mind for such implied readers familiar with the Jewish Scriptures. The important implication of the text, though, is that any implied shame resulting from Elizabeth’s infertility would have been removed by the miraculous conception in her mature age. Luke is already demonstrating that typical categories of honour and shame will be upended in his narrative.

### **3.2.2 Social and cultural texture expressed in ascribed honour**

I will now seek to show that Luke uses priestly rhetorolect to introduce into the narrative an aspect of the honour-shame value. As pointed out by Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003, 225, 365–366), genealogies were used in ancient Mediterranean texts to encode vital information in order “to place people properly in the social order” in the world of the text.

#### **3.2.2.1 John’s parents are honoured.**

As pointed out above, in 1:39, Luke describes Zechariah as a village priest who, along with his wife Elizabeth, resides in “a Judean town in the hill country”. By referring to Zechariah as *ιερεὺς τις* and by indicating that he was chosen for his priestly duty by the casting of lots, Luke is clarifying that Zechariah is “not the high priest, nor is he from the high-priestly family; he is a simple priest” (Bovon, 2002, 33, note 15). Luke is bringing to the fore

Zechariah's priestly credentials and purity. Josephus (*Vita* 1) supports the emphasis of Autero (2011, 41) on the "hierarchical nature of the priesthood" in that Josephus emphasised his own elite priestly lineage from "the first of the twenty-four courses". Josephus claims himself to have been a descendant of "the chief family of that first course" (*Vita* 2). Zechariah thus, in fact, descends from a minor rural priestly family rather than being a member of an elite or leading Jerusalem family. Horsley (2006, 95–99) provides a valuable depth of insight into the chasm that existed between the powerful aristocratic high priests of Jerusalem and ordinary village priests such as Zechariah. Luke's description of his order and role in the priesthood mark him off from the power structures of the central Temple-City.

However, as Autero (2011, 44) concludes, (in the world of the real author) the high honour ascribed to Zechariah and, by implication to John, would have been due to his status in his own village, and possibly his advanced age. The fact that according to Luke 1:5 he was married to a descendant of Aaron would also have increased the degree of this honour ascribed to him (Autero, 2011, 43). Thus, although the priestly credentials of Zechariah and Elizabeth have been established, along with the ascribed honour due to John's family, their humble circumstances are also, by implication, clarified. Their ascribed honour thus results from their connections to the sacred history of Israel's faith and religious heritage rather than from their associations with those who enjoy economic and political power as members of the aristocratic priestly classes, who later were to play a role in the crucifixion of Jesus (Luke 22-23). As a descendant of a priestly family with impeccable credentials, then, John is himself by implication a member of the Aaronic priesthood, even though he never functions as a priest. These elements constitute priestly discourse that provides the backdrop to John's infancy narrative. Luke hereby roots the narrative in the cultural and religious history of ancient Israel and adds great rhetorical force to the rhetology of the narrative.

Luke then proceeds to emphasise the religious piety of this priestly couple. In Luke's words, they are both *δίκαιοι . . . ἐναντίον τοῦ θεοῦ* (1:6a). Zechariah and Elizabeth are people who live *ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐντολαῖς καὶ δικαιώμασιν τοῦ κυρίου* (1:6b). Bovon (2002, 33, note 19) holds that the wording of Luke's description of piety in 1:6 mixes idioms typical of Luke's writing style with idioms from the LXX, drawing on phrases such as, *αἱ ἐντολαὶ καὶ τὰ δικαιώματα καὶ τὰ κρίματα* (Num 36:13); *τὰ δικαιώματα αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ* (Deut 4:40); and *τὰς ἐντολάς μου καὶ τὰ δικαιώματά μου καὶ τὰ νόμιμά μου* (Gen 26:5).

In a surprising twist, in spite of their piety, they had no children (1:7a) because Elizabeth was *στεῖρα* (1:7a) and she and Zechariah were *ἀμφότεροι προβεβηκότες ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις αὐτῶν ἦσαν* (1:7b). The intertexture of the opening texture echoes several accounts in the Jewish Scriptures: (1) the barrenness of Elizabeth echoes the barrenness of Abraham and Sarah (*καὶ ἦν Σαρα στεῖρα καὶ οὐκ ἐτεκνοποίει* – Gen 11:30 LXX); (2) Samson’s mother (*καὶ ἡ γυνὴ αὐτοῦ στεῖρα καὶ οὐκ ἔτικτεν* – Judg 13:2b LXX), and (3) Samuel’s mother *καὶ τῆ Ἄννα οὐκ ἦν παιδίον* – 1 Sam 1:2b LXX; *καὶ κύριος ἀπέκλεισεν τὰ περὶ τὴν μήτραν αὐτῆς* – 1 Sam 1:5b LXX). In this regard, Luke’s description of Elizabeth’s childlessness seems to constitute a Jewish *topos*.

### 3.2.2.2 John is honoured by the implied rhetology of the narrative.

Priestly rhetorlect in this opening texture of narrative unit 1 forms a backdrop for the rest of the narrative of John’s birth. It envisages the thirdspace new reality of an “environment in which God acts redemptively among humans in the world” (Robbins, 2009, xxvi). Because it thus prepares the way for the main thrust of narrative unit 1, that is, the birth and ministry of John, priestly rhetorlect plays a supportive role to the other rhetorlects identified in this section. However, in spite of this priestly rhetorlect forming the backdrop to John’s future prophetic mission, as pointed out above, John never functions as a priest. In fact, as I will seek to show below, Luke’s narrative of the birth of John breaks with priestly tradition because it predominantly comprises prophetic rhetorlect and John does not follow in his father’s priestly vocation. Prophetic rhetorlect blended with other modes of discourse defines John’s future mission rather than priestly discourse, as would have been expected of the son of a priestly couple with such impeccable priestly credentials.

The important question to be asked is, what is achieved rhetorically by this establishment of a backdrop of priestly discourse as Luke sets the scene for John’s annunciation in the sacred temple space? By using priestly rhetorlect in this way, Luke anchors his gospel in the priestly traditions of ancient Israel. As the narrative unfolds, the discourse shifts to a more prominent use of prophetic rhetorlect. This strategy achieves two important things: (1) Honour is ascribed to John’s parents (and by implication to John) in preparation for the account of his annunciation in the temple, adding to its rhetorical force; and (2) Luke hereby anchors the whole of his gospel in the heritage of Israel’s faith, in which the temple has played a central role. Since Luke’s Gospel is commonly believed to have been written after the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, it would have been particularly important for Luke to emphasise the continuity between the faith of the Jewish Scriptures and the person and work of Jesus as God’s *σωτὴρ ὃς ἐστὶν χριστὸς κύριος*, as proclaimed in the

rest of his gospel. As I will emphasise in my analysis of the Jesus birth and infancy narrative in chapter 4, the closing texture of Luke's infancy narratives in narrative unit 8 is again set in the temple and manifests priestly rhetorolect. This rhetorical framing lays rhetorical emphasis on the rooting of these events in the heritage of Israel's faith.<sup>51</sup>

A close connection exists between honour-shame and kinship values in the world of Luke's text. Honour is being ascribed to John's parents (kin) and, by implication to John. The honour ascribed to John is eventually shown to be related to his chosen role as the one who is to prepare the way for the *κύριος* (1:17a, 76). It becomes clear in the progressive texture of the two interwoven and juxtaposed infancy narratives that Jesus is in fact the *κύριος* for whom John prepares the way. Luke is able to get away with leaving the referent of *κύριος* somewhat unclear at this point because his audience is likely to comprise a high-context society (Hall, 1989). Taken at face value, *κύριος* in 1:17 most naturally refers to God. However, read in the light of the later narrational development, it is clear that the honour being ascribed to John's parents in this introductory narrative unit is intended to show John to be a suitable herald for the coming of Jesus as the *σωτὴρ ὃς ἐστὶν χριστὸς κύριος* – but that is to jump ahead in the progressive texture of Luke's unfolding narrative.

In the remainder of this chapter and in chapter 4 below, I will seek to show that, as this role unfolds, John is increasingly subordinated to Jesus in the progressive texture of the narrative. The honour ascribed to John progressively decreases as the narrative unfolds and, as I seek to show in chapter 4, the honour ascribed to Jesus progressively increases.

### **3.3 MIDDLE TEXTURE: JOHN IS HONOURED IN HIS ANNUNCIATION (LUKE 1:8–23).**

Verse 8 marks the start of the middle texture of narrative unit 1. The scene is being set for the angelic annunciation in Luke 1:8–10. Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003, 225) point out that Luke's account of Zechariah's angelic encounter fits into the typical pattern of the birth announcement stories of the Jewish Scriptures and constitutes a *topos*. Such announcement stories typically follow the sequential pattern of "announcement of the birth of a child, its name, reason for the name, future of the child" (Malina and Rohrbaugh, 2003, 225).<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Green (1997, 61) has calculated that approximately 40% of Luke 1–2 recounts scenes that are set within the temple bounds. My analysis later in this chapter highlights the importance of repetitive texture in Luke's narrative of John's birth.

<sup>52</sup> Other accounts of birth announcements can be found in the following texts of the Jewish Scriptures: Gen 16:11–12; Judg 13:7; Isa 7:14–16, 9:6–7; and in the NT: Luke 1:30–33; Matt 1:20–21.

Rhetorically, the intertexture of these echoes, and the use of a familiar pattern from the Jewish Scriptures, appear to be intended to facilitate cultural identification on the part of Luke's readers. This would seem to confirm Robbins's (2010a, 143) assessment, based on the rhetoric of the discourse, that the implied author and audience reflect, "a Jewish sphere of society using the Greek language, the lingua franca of the Mediterranean world." The intertexture lends authority to the role of the son promised to Zechariah and Elizabeth (1:13). I begin my analysis of this pericope by making some observations regarding the rhetography and rhetology of the text.

### **3.3.1 A rhetographic appeal to the imagination**

We have seen that the opening texture in 1:6–7 manifests priestly discourse. This priestly discourse now continues in the middle texture of the narrative unit. Readers familiar with the Jewish religious and cultural heritage would have understood that the geophysical location of John's annunciation in the temple was the locus of God's presence on earth.

#### **3.3.1.1 Imagining sacred space**

In his study on the textures of Luke 16:14–18, Bruehler (2013) begins his analysis with an examination of the rhetography of his text "because the images of places and people evoked by a passage are often the first things that come into an audience's consciousness". Taking my cue from him, I begin by noting that the account of John's annunciation begins with an account of Zechariah entering the temple of the Lord (1:9). We know from 1 Kgs 8:8 that this would have been **הַקֹּדֶשׁ**, the term used in the HB for the temple space. I refer to it as the Holy Place. Luke uses **ναός** consistently in his gospel to refer to the Holy Place (Luke 1:9, 21, 22; 23:45) (see Green, 1997, 70). This venue is adjacent to the section of the temple referred to in the HB as **מִבְּיַת לְדָבִיר לְקֹדֶשׁ הַקֹּדָשִׁים** (1 Kgs 6:16). The NRSV translates the phrase as the "inner sanctuary . . . the most holy place". I use the term Holy of Holies to refer to this part of the temple.<sup>53</sup>

The rhetography of the passage sets the scene in the sacred space of the temple, potentially inspiring a vivid image of typical temple services in holy spaces, and the reference to

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<sup>53</sup> When Luke refers to the temple in general, he tends to use words such as **ἱερόν** (Luke 2:27, 37, 46; 14:9; 18:10; 9:45, 47; 20:1; 21:5, 37; 22:52, 53; 24:53), **οἶκος** (Luke 6:4; 11:51; 19:46) and **ἄγιος τόπος** (Acts 6:13).

incense suggests to the readers' imagination the fragrance of the incense as Zechariah goes about his duties in the temple. Luke's text calls to mind mental images of temples as he draws on verbal signs that appeal to the imagination. This rhetography implies an appeal to the intersection between the divine and human worlds, thereby adding to their sense of importance in the world of the text. The setting in the sanctuary is emotionally charged, but it is ironically completely inaccessible to the average person in the world of the real readers. The setting is thus esoteric in that it is both numinous and secret. Its rhetorical force is greatly enhanced by the interest hereby rhetorically inspired. The social and cultural intertexture expressed in these echoes of the history and heritage of Israel's temple-centred faith lays the rhetorical foundation for the account of Gabriel's promise to Zechariah.

Luke's identification of the Holy Place as the setting for the scene that follows adds an important spatial ingredient to the rhetography of the text. His reference to the assembly of people engaged in a prayer vigil outside the temple while waiting for Zechariah (1:10, 21), echoes the experience of Daniel in the Jewish Scriptures. In Dan 9:2–23, Daniel is praying at the time of the evening sacrifice. With fasting and sackcloth and ashes, he seeks an answer from God, appealing for mercy on behalf of Israel. While at prayer, the angel Gabriel appears to him. The presence of the people gathered in prayer outside the temple suggests that the evening sacrifice was also in view for Luke in this account (Nolland, 1989, 29). The Jewish Scriptures reflect a close association between the incense, prayer and evening sacrifice.<sup>54</sup> These details add to the rhetographic impact of Luke's depiction. The references to the rituals conducted by Zechariah in the Holy Place of the temple, with the assembly of people gathered outside for prayer at the time of the evening sacrifice, potentially conjure up, for readers familiar with the cultural context of the ancient Mediterranean world, mental images of sights and smells of worship in temples and sanctuaries that formed part of the social fabric of their world. Since the temple was understood to be the locus of God's presence on earth, the rhetography of Luke's temple and priestly references enable an appeal to memories of experienced sacred spaces (firstspace priestly conceptualisation) that imply the truth of the priestly community, represented by Zechariah, serving God and serving God's people as they facilitate a "beneficial exchange of holiness and purity between God and humans (thirdspace) (see Robbins, 2009, xxvii, 109).

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<sup>54</sup> See the reference to all three aspects in Ps 141:2 of the HB: תִּכּוֹן תְּפִלָּתִי קִטְרֹת לְפָנֶיךָ.

The intertext of Exod 30 provides the instructions for the temple rituals pertaining to the altar of incense. Daily incense offerings were mandated to take place before the morning sacrifice and following the evening sacrifice. According to Philo (*Her.* 41.199; *Spec.* 1.51.275–276), this practice expressed prayerful thanksgiving and dedication of the whole world to God. Philo held that it manifested the honour afforded to the altar of incense because of the costly materials from which it was constructed, the way in which it was erected, its locality in the Holy Place of the temple, and its close tie to the daily sacrificial rite. Parsons (2015, 35) points out that Luke’s reference to *πᾶν τὸ πλῆθος . . . τοῦ λαοῦ* praying outside the temple (1:10b) emphasises the importance of these events for *all* God’s people. Thus, the fact that according to Exodus 30, the evening incense offering took place at the altar of incense in *שַׁדְרָדָה*, in such close proximity to the *שַׁדְרָדָה שַׁדְרָה*, further strengthens the honour ascribed to Zechariah in terms of Luke’s description of his role (see Parsons, 2015, 35) – and by implication to his son John.

Through the rhetography of the scene of Zechariah the priest serving at the altar of incense in the holy space of the temple in 1:8–10, Luke achieves a firstspace reminder of the workings of the temple in Jerusalem, inspiring images of priests serving God in the rooms and spaces of the temple with its sacred fittings and furniture. By means of a casting of lots, God is exercising divine control through his presence in the temple. The temple had come to serve as an earthly representation or counterpart of God’s heavenly dwelling. Secondspace priestly conceptualisation brought actual experiences of sacred spaces like the temple into close conceptual association with God’s presence and a visualised heavenly temple. In the worship rituals, a serving priest would have been understood to be presenting incense and other offerings to God in the heavenly temple, on behalf of God’s people, as holy servants of God (secondspace priestly conceptualisation). It is this secondspace priestly thinking that expresses the conviction that heaven and earth come together in the temple as the *axis mundi*. The text implies that the real author envisages readers for whom these images of temple priestly practices and the temple would appeal to their own past “experiences of sacrificial and mystery temples” (secondspace) (Robbins, 2009, xxvi). The implication is that God is envisaged as inhabiting a heavenly temple city ensuring that, as Zechariah goes about his priestly duties in the Holy Place of the earthly temple, he is in the right place at the right time. The temple is a place where, through representation of the high priest, and by means of imagined space, the people of Israel encounter the transformative and life-giving presence of God’s glory in the Holy of Holies (thirdspace priestly rhetorlect).

The idea of a meeting between the divine and earthly already found expression in the references to God as king (מֶלֶךְ) in the Psalms of the *HB*. Schäder (2013, 81) views the phrase, *עֲלֵה אֱלֹהִים בְּתַרְוֵעָה* in Psalm 47:6 as, in all likelihood, referring to God's presence in the earthly sanctuary, in the sense that it functions as the earthly counterpart to God's heavenly dwelling. The temple space thus served as a locus in the minds of the Israelite faithful for God's universal ruling presence, and due to this close association with YHWH, it was deemed to be holy (Green, 1997, 131).

Priests ministering to God in the temple are motivated by a hope to bring about particular benefits to their community. In this sense they hope to make God, as divine patron, favourably disposed to them. This thirdspace conceptuality in the space of blending thus manifests priestly rhetorolect. The *topoi* of "sacrifice", "priestly blessings" and "offerings", so typical of priestly rhetorolect, are thus all present in the references to (1) the priestly lineage of Zechariah and Elizabeth, (2) Zechariah being chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the temple to offer the incense offering, and (3) the assembly of people praying outside (see Robbins, No date). The temple rhetography is evident in Luke's use of images and scene descriptions, and in the account of Zechariah's actions. He hereby enlivens his text while, at the same time, using this temple rhetography as a firstspace reminder to appeal to past experiences of temple space, and a visualised secondspace conceptualisation of Zechariah as a selected priest and member of the priestly community, serving a holy and pure God on behalf of God's people in the temple. At the same time the temple rhetography implies a thirdspace vision of implied readers becoming beneficiaries of God's holiness and purity. Luke hereby uses priestly rhetorolect to appeal to the imagination of his readers, while contributing to the development of the progressive texture of his narrative. As divinely selected priest, Zechariah plays a highly honoured role in the narrative as he enacts his priestly function and encounters the angel of the Lord in the temple.

### **3.3.1.2 Sensory-aesthetic texture in the zone of purposeful action**

Various expressions of sensory-aesthetic texture are used by Luke to add to the impact of the rhetography of this text, increasing the potential level of engagement between Luke and his readers. The fact that the events described take place in the Jerusalem Temple, the *axis mundi*, the nexus, the meeting place between heaven and earth (Green, 1997, 62, 131), strengthens the honour ascribed to John from the time of his annunciation. Luke creates a

sense of narrative time and space that helps to make his narration effective communication. My analysis locates aspects of Luke's narrative expressed in three sensory-aesthetic zones.

The first strand of sensory-aesthetic texture employed by Luke in this section is expressed in the *zone of purposeful action*, as described in chapter 2 (see Malina, 2001 [1981], 69). In 1:8–11 Luke presents a number of actions described in this zone. He explains that (1) Zechariah had been selected by lot, in line with priestly custom (1:9); (2) in 1:9, Zechariah enters the temple, which is sacred space; (3) the assembly of people are meanwhile waiting outside praying (1:10); and (4) an angel of the Lord is sent from the presence of God and appears to Zechariah in the temple (1:11). The purposeful action expressed in this selection also manifests underlying historical intertexture in that it echoes the ancient Greek cultural understanding of the casting of lots to be a way of thwarting human will (Hanse, 1967). This historical intertexture suggests that readers familiar with ancient Greek cultural practices and values would have understood the narrative to be emphasising divine sovereignty. Godet (2009 [1888], 89) points out that the casting of lots was also understood to be a way of trusting in God's sovereignty in ancient Israel and was at the heart of the Israelite priestly custom: "cet emploi du sort provenait du besoin de ne rien laisser à l'arbitraire humain dans le service du sanctuaire." He goes on to note that, according to the Talmud, such was the honour ascribed to this priestly duty that "[l]e prêtre qui avait eu l'honneur d'entrer une fois dans le Lieu saint n'avait pas le droit de tirer au sort une seconde fois dans la même semaine" (Godet, 2009 [1888], 89).<sup>55</sup>

These actions are central to the narrative and invite empathetic participation in the world of Luke's text. Luke's description of Zechariah's entry into the temple and his priestly actions hereby contribute to the developing argumentative texture of the narrative by using familiar spatial concepts that appeal to the imagination. The reference in 1:10–12 to the assembly of people praying outside the temple creates a further strand of rhetorical texture expressed in the *zone of purposeful action*. In the previous section, I drew attention to the potential rhetorical effect of the inclusion of this detail in Luke's narrative.

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<sup>55</sup> The text of Proverbs 16:33 (בְּחֵיק יוֹטֵל אֶת-הַגּוֹרֵל וּמִיָּהוָה כָּל-מִשְׁפָּטוֹ) suggests that the ancient Israelites understood the casting of lots to be a way of consulting God. The actions referred to in Joshua 18–19; Ezek 45:1; 47:22 would appear to reflect a similar attitude. In the opening portion of the Book of Acts, Luke again makes reference to the casting of lots as a way of discerning God's will (Acts 2:26).

In 1:19 it emerges that the angel that appears to Zechariah in v. 11 is named Gabriel. The angel stands at the right-hand side of the altar of incense (1:11b), communicating to the implied reader that “the angel’s visit was not ominous”, since this was the favoured side (Green, 1997, 70).<sup>56</sup> As I will seek to show below, other related references written in the *zone of purposeful action* (chosen by lot, entering, offering incense, praying, appearing, standing), demonstrate an important overarching theme expressed in the rhetoric of this middle texture. The angel’s appearance to Zechariah takes place in the very sacred space where priests are at their closest to God in divine service, adjacent to the Holy of Holies.<sup>57</sup>

The vibrancy of Luke’s narrative is heightened by the purposeful action of the role players. The people praying outside the temple wait patiently for Zechariah to finish his priestly tasks and to exit the temple. When he eventually does so, they conclude from his muteness and enthusiastic motioning that he has experienced a divine encounter in the Holy Place of the temple. Zechariah completes his term of priestly duty and returns home to his wife Elizabeth in 1:21–23. In due course, the divine promise communicated by the angel is fulfilled and Elizabeth conceives.

### **3.3.1.3 Sensory-aesthetic texture in the *zone of emotion-fused thought***

The second strand of sensory-aesthetic texture expressed in the text is written in the *zone of emotion-fused thought*. The omniscient narrator has insight into the thoughts and emotions of the characters. Luke uses this to build a narrational case for the honour ascribed to Zechariah and Elizabeth and, by implication, to John. In 1:11–20, Luke describes Zechariah’s reaction to the appearance of the angel. In 1:12, he informs his readers that, upon seeing the angel, Zechariah is extremely disconcerted and fearful (φόβος), that is, a reference to emotions internal to the thought world of the character, and an intertextually

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<sup>56</sup> The Jewish Scriptures reflected a preference for right over left from ancient times (for example, Gen 48:17–19; Job 23:9; Ps 14:9; 1 Kgs 2:19; 1 Sam 11:2; Zech 11:17; Lev 14:14; Eccl 10:2) (see Fitzmyer, 1981, 325).

<sup>57</sup> Worship and sacred service expressed through the actions of Zechariah’s body also manifest aspects of cultural intertexture with Paul’s writings. There is an echo of a theme also picked up by Paul in his letter to the Romans, where he exhorts his readers, through the mercy of God to make a sacrificial offering of their physical bodies to God (Rom 12:1). This similarity suggests that for Luke, as for Paul, surrendering our physical bodies in God’s service is to be understood as a true and meaningful expression of worship.

appropriate way of responding to an angel.<sup>58</sup> Rhetorically, the text appears to be attempting to create an atmosphere of awe-filled respect in the minds of readers. In the progressive texture, the narrative is preparing for the imminent and authoritative announcement of the angel. The angel's response to Zechariah again expresses communication in the *zone of emotion-fused thought* in Gabriel's response to Zechariah's fear.<sup>59</sup> This suggests an invitation for readers to share emotionally and imaginatively in the strangeness and disconcerting nature of Zechariah's experience.<sup>60</sup>

Luke's repeated reference to the internal thought-world of the narrational characters is a key feature of Luke's infancy narratives. Dinkler (2015) refers to them as "interior monologues". The phenomenon is again evident in 1:21 in which the omniscient narrator reports that the people waiting in prayer for Zechariah outside the temple marvelled (ἐθαύμαζον) at his extended stay in the confines of the temple. A form of this verb is repeated again in 1:63, in reference to relatives and neighbours of Zechariah and Elizabeth who were amazed (ἐθαύμασαν) at Zechariah's choice of name for John.

Dinkler (2015, 373–374) finds support in the work of Bovon (2010, 387–388) in arguing against the "modern consensus" that ancient Mediterranean societies were anti-introspective and collectivistic. Bovon (2010, 388) calls for a rediscovery of the importance of the soul and the divine, the invisible, and a recognition of the place of introspection in the ancient Mediterranean world. At the same time, he does not deny the importance of the human body as "the locus of social practices and the expression of power relationships". Dinkler (2015, 373–374) refutes the view of Malina (2008), who holds that "persons in antiquity were anti-introspective and not psychologically minded at all. . . . While ancient persons were certainly individuals, they were not individualistic; rather they were collective persons . . . ." Dinkler (2015, 374) observes that Luke in particular demonstrates an interest in the inner life of individuals. She points out that Luke repeatedly "reveals

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<sup>58</sup> The GNT verb used here is ἐταράχθη, the aorist of ταρασσω, the same verb used in the LXX to describe Daniel's reaction to his dream (καὶ αἱ ὀράσεις τῆς κεφαλῆς μου ἐτάρασσόν με – Dan 7:15 LXX Theodotion), bringing into consideration a further strand of intertexture.

<sup>59</sup> See § 3.3.1.4 for my discussion of the repetitive texture that the angel's reply of μὴ φοβοῦ manifests, along with a string of other occurrences of the instruction, and § 3.3.3.4 for my discussion of its intertexture.

<sup>60</sup> See the work of Pilch (2016) on the understanding of emotions in the ancient Mediterranean world.

characters' thoughts through the literary device of interior monologue" (Dinkler, 2015, 375–376).<sup>61</sup> Dinkler is probably correct in her observation that "[Luke's] internal monologue is a literary device used to do particular kinds of rhetorical work in dialogical relationship with the implied reader" (Dinkler, 2015, 380). As she insightfully puts it, "[a]ccess to a character's private inner experience can cause readers to empathize with the thinker, identifying with his or her plight" (Dinkler, 2015, 393).

Dinkler's perspective draws attention to Luke's rhetorical role as storyteller. He masterfully employs sensory-aesthetic texture to captivate the attention of his readers. His narrative proclaims that John comes as a mighty prophet to go before the Lord and to "make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (1:17). Rhetorically, the omniscient narrator uses the opportunity to call attention to the implied argument of the narrative. Luke is warning readers that there is more going on here than meets the eye. This rhetology invites Luke's readers to reflect deeply on the implication of these narratives.

#### **3.3.1.4 Sensory-aesthetic texture in the *zone of self-expressive speech***

A third strand of sensory-aesthetic texture evident in the middle texture of this narrative unit lies in the *zone of self-expressive speech*. The narrational texture and sensory-aesthetic texture now shift to a series of first-person accounts of *attributed speech* in which the sacred texture of the angel's appearance is further developed (Luke 1:13–17, 18, 19–20).

In addition to facilitating empathy and inspiring imagination, Luke's narration also manifests intertexture, beginning with the encouragement to Zechariah not to be afraid (1:13) (see Malina, 2001 [1981], 69). The vocalisation of the angel in the *zone of self-expressive speech* comprises the central aspect of narrative unit one. The instruction  $\mu\lambda\ \phi\omicron\beta\omicron\upsilon$  and its cognates manifest repetitive texture that runs throughout Luke-Acts, each time communicating the encouraging assurance of God's care (see Luke 1:30; 2:10; 5:10; 8:50; 12:4, 7; Acts 18:9; 27:24). The encouraging imperative  $\mu\lambda\ \phi\omicron\beta\omicron\upsilon$  expresses intertexture with concepts and wording in the Jewish Scriptures. In the LXX,  $\mu\lambda\ \phi\omicron\beta\omicron\upsilon$  is most often used to allay fears on occasions of divine visitation (see Gen 15:1; Judg 6:23; Dan 10:12, 19; Tob 12:17). In the world of the Lukan text, Zechariah receives a divine oracle from the angel in response to his and Elizabeth's prayer for a son.

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<sup>61</sup> See the more developed treatment by Dinkler (2013) on Luke's attention to the interior world of his characters.

Luke also recounts Zechariah's expression of doubt. In 1:20, Gabriel warns Zechariah of the consequences of his disbelief: he will become mute until the promises are fulfilled. It is in fact precisely this *self-expressive speech* of the angel Gabriel that Zechariah has not believed. His consequential punishment will be a limitation on his ability, in turn, to express himself vocally. The sensory-aesthetic texture strengthens the potential impact on the reader by means of the implied warning that doubt may have consequences.

In terms of the social and cultural texture of the narrative, this is a shameful turn of events. As Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003, 226) point out, "[i]n honour-shame societies, public speaking is the male role. Eloquence is a male virtue. Being struck dumb would render a male passive and therefore dishonoured." It is somewhat ironic that in 1:21–22, this very limitation, placed on his ability for *self-expressive speech* on the part of Zechariah becomes the sign interpreted by the waiting assembly to indicate that Zechariah has experienced a supernatural encounter in the temple and this, in some ways, obviates any loss of honour. Nolland (1989, 33) suggests the presence of an "apocalyptic secrecy motif according to which Zechariah's silence is designed to keep God's plans from human beings until the appropriate time" but this is relatively unfounded, except possibly for the fact that the angel Gabriel's usual location is standing in the presence of God. Gabriel's words communicate comfort and encouragement while, at the same time, informing and challenging Zechariah and Luke's implied readers. Luke's implied readers are invited to become active participants in his storyline, informed and challenged by the angel's presence and message.

In these textures, the narrative also rhetorically emphasises the importance of the birth of John. The rhetology implies a stress on the imperative for readers to believe Luke's proclamation. As the progressive texture will eventually make clear, John will play a key role in preparing the way for the future ministry of Jesus.

### **3.3.2 A rhetological appeal to reason**

In the rhetography of narrative unit 1, Luke establishes his narrational argument that honour is being ascribed to Zechariah and, by implication, to John. Although not immediately obvious, the progressive texture of the infancy narratives eventually makes it clear that the honour ascribed to John climaxes specifically in respect of his role and function as the one who prepares the way for Jesus. Luke makes this point rhetorically by progressively shifting the ascription of honour from John to Jesus in the juxtaposed and interwoven infancy narratives.

#### **3.3.2.1 Rhetology expressed in a "knowing" motif**

The way in which Luke's text repeats the word "know" (ἐπιγινώσκω) in both 1:4 and 18 develops an important motif. When used in the prologue, the word refers to the outcome of Luke's aim, especially in respect of his first auditor and patron, Theophilus. Luke states in 1:4 that, having with great care acquainted himself with all these events (1:3), he had decided to write an orderly account for Theophilus so that he would ἐπιγνῶς the certainty of the things concerning which he had been instructed. This suggests the importance of Theophilus knowing the truth of the Jesus-events recounted in his gospel. Luke is making a rhetorical point that these events are fundamentally important. A form of the same word (γνώσομαι) is then repeated in Zechariah's expression of doubt in 1:18 where Zechariah enquires of the angel how he might know (γνώσκει) that the angel's promises will be realised.

In 1:20, Gabriel concludes with a declaration of the consequences of Zechariah's disbelief: he is struck dumb and, as a result of his muteness, he is severely hindered in his ability to share with others the details of the angelic encounter. Zechariah's forced silence is punitive, while at the same time it serves as a sign showing the fulfilment of the angel's promise (Nolland, 1989, 32–33). By implication, Luke is emphasising that his implied readers should also know the truth of these events. The narrative implies severe consequences for refusing to believe the accounts of his narrative.

### 3.3.2.2 Rhetology expressed in a "promise-fulfilment" motif

Furthermore, Luke anchors his narrative in Israelite tradition and heritage by developing a "promise-fulfilment" motif. He uses oral-scribal intertexture to anchor the angel's declaration of John's prophetic role firmly in the Jewish Scriptures. The cultural intertexture also connects the narrative with Jewish texts from the Second Temple Period, highlighting the relevance of the narrative for Luke's real readers.<sup>62</sup>

The presence of the promise-fulfilment motif becomes evident in Luke's use of various forms of the verb πληρόω. He first uses the word in his prologue, speaking of the fulfilment

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<sup>62</sup> My argument that the birth of Jesus as God's Messiah meets prophetic hopes and aspirations expressed in some literature of Second Temple Judaism does not deny the diversity of early Judaism. The comment of Charlesworth (1992, 5) in this regard speaks to this point: "No member of the Princeton Symposium on the Messiah holds that a critical historian can refer to a common Jewish messianic hope during the time of Jesus . . ." For an in-depth study on prophecy and fulfilment in Luke-Acts, see David Tiede (1980).

of events (τῶν πεπληροφορημένων – 1:1). Here it sets the tone and connects the prologue to the narrative that follows.<sup>63</sup> Upon hearing the angelic promise of John’s birth and the emphasis on his future role, Zechariah expresses his disbelief on account of his and Elizabeth’s advanced age (1:18). In response, the angel informs Zechariah of the consequences of his disbelief, and he declares that his words will be fulfilled (πληρωθήσονται – 1:20).

The *πληρόω* motif becomes clearer when we consider the ways in which the birth and ministry of John relate to the birth and ministry of Jesus, the one before whom John is to go (as becomes clear in the progressive texture of the narrative). The idea of fulfilment also frames Luke’s Gospel by his reference to fulfilment in Luke 1:1 (*πεπληροφορημένων* – 1:1), and again in reference to Jesus in Luke 24:44 (*πληρωθῆναι*) (see Nolland, 1989, 33). By referring to the events of the eventual death of Jesus as some form of “fulfilment”, Luke implies that the life and death of Jesus fulfil the hopes and expectations of the people of Israel. By employing the fulfilment motif in 1:18, Luke inserts into the progressive texture and rhetology of his juxtaposed and interwoven infancy narratives, a hint at the important role John is to play in relation to Jesus.

For Luke, it is specifically the people of Israel who are the beneficiaries of the fulfilment of these promises. The people of God feature prominently in John’s birth narrative. The people of God are represented by the assembly of people waiting prayerfully outside the temple for Zechariah to exit following his duty (1:10, 21). They are hinted at again in the reference to the “many” who will rejoice at his birth (1:14). They are specifically referred to in the promise that they will be deeply impacted by John’s future ministry (1:16). The people who turn back to God in response to John’s ministry will constitute a “people prepared for the Lord” (1:17). The events leading up to the birth of Jesus are shown to be a fulfilment of God’s foreordained purposes for the people of Israel.

This promise-fulfilment motif has long attracted the attention of interpreters. Since the publication of a seminal essay of Schubert (1957), scholars have widely recognised “proof from prophecy” as a major interest expressed in Luke-Acts. Schubert (1957, 165, note 1) was in turn indebted to the work of Cadbury (1927, especially 194–201), who put forward

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<sup>63</sup> For a helpful discussion of Luke’s Gospel prologue as typical of progymnastic rhetoric, see Robbins (1999, 63–83).

the idea that Luke-Acts is concerned with the themes of control and purpose.<sup>64</sup> In John's birth narrative, the motif lends rhetorical authority to Luke's narrative.

The promise-fulfilment motif also underlies the references to prayer, another prominent concept in John's birth narrative. The assembly of people gathered outside the temple are said to be at prayer (1:10), and Zechariah is assured that his prayers have been heard (1:13). Bovon (2002, 35) holds that the assembly of people praying outside the temple represents the entire nation awaiting redemption (1:16–17). Their waiting is now being rewarded, for "with John the Baptist, the new age dawns for the entire nation" (Bovon, 2002, 35). The angel's annunciation of the birth of this prophet brings together a promise of the fulfilment of both the individual hopes of Zechariah and the corporate hopes of the nation (Bovon, 2002, 35). In such an honour-shame culture, these promises ascribe honour to John: He is the one chosen by God to go before the Lord in his important role of preparing for the arrival of God's redemption.

Although the fulfilment of God's promises to Israel is crucial for Luke, the promise-fulfilment motif has been given a very different texture in his infancy narratives from that of Matthew. For Luke, God's promises are fulfilled in general terms in the ministry of John and of Jesus, as is evident in the broad strokes of history and as hinted at in the intertexture discussed below. In Matthew, on the other hand, God's acts of fulfilment are outlined with far greater specificity by means of recitations from the Jewish Scriptures (see Matt 1:23; 2:6; 2:15; 2:18; 2:23).

### 3.3.2.3 Rhetology expressed as Luke builds his case

The premise of the implied argument that honour is being ascribed to Zechariah and, by implication, to John, rests in Zechariah being God's chosen priest to enter the Holy Place, in such close proximity to the Holy of Holies. This is sacred space where divine encounters would not be regarded as out of the ordinary for those privileged enough to enter. The Holy of Holies was deemed to be a sacred meeting space between the divine and human. Mircea Eliade (1957; 1958, esp. 367–387; 1959, esp. 20–67), in his study on the form and meaning of sacred spaces, has promoted the concept of a temple as the *axis mundi* of a community. He popularised the term "sacred space", drawing on the terminology of Durkheim (2008

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<sup>64</sup> See the work of Strauss (1995, 76–195), who provides a comprehensive overview and analysis of the promise-fulfilment motif in Luke-Acts in respect of the coming of Jesus as the Davidic Messiah.

[1912]), who distinguished between the “profane” and the “sacred” and defined the sacred as something set apart.<sup>65</sup> In terms of the Jewish understanding of the day, we know from Josephus (*A.J.* 3.181) that Moses was said to have distinguished the tabernacle into one part that was accessible to all, representing the land and the sea, and another part that was only accessible to God, “because heaven is inaccessible to men”. Eliade (1959, 43–45) argues from this that “the Holy Place represented earth, and the Holy of Holies heaven”. In the understanding of the Jews at the time, heaven and earth meet in the Jerusalem Temple. The Holy of Holies represents the centre of the transcendental world, par excellence, and the Holy Place represents the centre of the inhabited world. The result of Luke’s enthymemic argument is based on this rhetographic appeal. It implies an invitation to readers familiar with temples of the ancient Mediterranean and Middle Eastern world as spaces where the divine and human worlds intersect, to imagine Zechariah entering such a sacred space in the Jerusalem Temple.

The narrative implies a key enthymematic argument regarding honour ascribed to John and his role in preparing the way for the *κύριος*. The narrative in this way manifests what Robbins (2009, 16) refers to as an expression of the “logic of rhetorical reasoning”. Luke is making a rhetorical point that is important for the overall message of John’s infancy narrative, and for the message of his gospel as a whole. One such argument lies in the case being made for the authority and trustworthiness of the angel’s promise, based on the sacred geophysical location of the angelophany, and on the fact that the angel has been sent from the very presence of God.<sup>66</sup> Zechariah’s muteness is then explained as the consequence of his reluctance to trust in the truthfulness of the angel’s promise.

The most important strand of rhetology implied in narrative unit 1 relates to the ascription of honour. Honour is ascribed to John’s parents using priestly rhetorolect, and honour is ascribed to John, the promised great prophet, in the prophetic, apocalyptic and wisdom

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<sup>65</sup> Eliade’s views have been adapted and used in the work on sacred space and structural style by Bennett (1997), the work on sanctuaries and sacred spaces in ancient Greece by Alcock and Osborne (1994), and the work on sacred space and place in Judaism by Kunin (1998).

<sup>66</sup> Theophanies and angelophanies in the temple are very rare in Jewish writings. There is no mention of an angelophany in the temple courts in the Jewish Scriptures, although Isaiah 6 describes a Theophany which, by Second Temple Judaism, would perhaps be less likely than an angelophany since God had come to be understood as more transcendent. The argument thus has mainly rhetorical thrust in the narrative world of the text. See Josephus’s reference to the angelophanies experienced by Jaddus the High Priest in *A.J.* 11,326-328, and to the experience of Hyrcanus the High Priest in *A.J.* 13, 282–283.

rhetorolects of his annunciation account. The overarching result of the argument of narrative unit 1 is that John is ascribed great honour in his ancestral lineage, annunciation, and promised future role as prophet making ready a people prepared for the Lord. The underlying implied rule is that a highly honoured prophet would be a fitting herald to go before the Lord (1:17). The case at hand becomes clear as Luke's narrative progresses. His initially ambiguous use of intertexture with Mal 3:1, 22–23 (LXX) gives way to a more overt identification of Jesus as the *κύριος* before whom John goes. Luke's characterisation of Jesus as the *κύριος* in the progressive texture of his infancy narratives is discussed in greater detail in my analysis of the Luke's narrative of the birth and infancy of Jesus in chapter 4. At this point it suffices to emphasise John's important role as the one who will go before the Lord (1:17), and the subtle echo of oral-scribal intertexture with Malachi, where the text declares that the prophetic role of this promised figure is to prepare the way of the Lord (Mal 3:1a LXX).<sup>67</sup> The complexity underlying Luke's use of *κύριος* here, and again later in the narrative in 1:76, ought not to be underestimated. Since Luke's implied audience appears predominantly to be Jewish Christians, purely Jewish sensibilities may not be at play. In 1:43 Elizabeth has already addressed Mary as *ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ κυρίου μου*. In that context *κύριος* is a clear reference to Jesus. The intertexture with Ps 110:1 LXX allows for this in its use of the phrase, *Εἶπεν ὁ κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ μου*. The fact that in Luke 1:76, John is identified as the *προφήτης ὑψίστου*, who will *προπορεύσῃ . . . ἐνώπιον κυρίου ἐτοιμάσαι ὁδοὺς αὐτοῦ*, would, certainly in Christian circles, hint at him preparing the way for Jesus. Also, in the progressive texture of the infancy narratives, Luke 2:11 eventually makes explicit the identification of Jesus, the *σωτὴρ ὃς ἐστὶν χριστὸς κύριος*, as the one who is in view as the *κύριος*.

### 3.3.3 Intertexture grounds the narrative in Jewish history and culture.

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<sup>67</sup> See my discussion of oral-scribal intertexture with Malachi in § 3.3.3.2 below.

Luke grounds his narrative in Israelite tradition and heritage by means of intertexture with the literature of the Jewish Scriptures and culture reflected in the literature of early Judaism.

### **3.3.3.1 Oral-scribal intertexture with the Genesis account of Abraham and Sarah**

Luke's narrative of John's annunciation manifests intertexture between Zechariah's doubt-filled response (Luke 1:18) and the Genesis account of Abraham's question to the Lord in response to the promise that land will be given to Abraham and his descendants as a permanent possession (see the reference to *κατὰ τί γνώσομαι τοῦτο*; in the LXX of Gen 15:8). This view is further supported by the existence of several other possible echoes of the account of Abraham and Sarah in these verses (for example, the echo of Gen 11:30 in Luke 1:7; Gen 21:1b and 22:18 in Luke 1:13; and Gen 18:14 in Luke 1:37). Bovon (2002, 34) identifies in these echoes the employment of a common Jewish *topos*, that is, "the proclamation of an extraordinary birth to a childless couple". In his view, the account of the angel appearing to Zechariah is modelled specifically on Abraham's theophany.<sup>68</sup>

The Gen 15 passage provides an account of a dream-vision experienced by Abraham, in which he too is encouraged not to fear (Gen 15:1). The Lord goes on to assure Abraham that he has been remembered. Zechariah's disbelief thus harks back to Luke's stated purpose expressed in the prologue: to communicate the trustworthiness of his account of these events. The angelic messenger responds to Zechariah's doubts by declaring his credentials (Luke 1:19). Having remained anonymous up to this point, the angel now introduces himself as Γαβριήλ (Luke 1:19). He goes on to establish his credentials as one sent from the very presence of God, attesting to the divine source and, thus, the reliability of his message.

Green (1997, 74) also draws attention to similarities between Luke's account of Zechariah and Elizabeth and the account in Gen 21:1–21 in which God's covenant with Abraham is fulfilled through the birth of his son Isaac (esp. Gen 21:1b LXX). God answers Abraham and Sarah's prayers while promising in Gen 22:18 that all nations will be blessed through their offspring. The echoes of the Abrahamic account in Luke 1:13 of the angel's annunciation of

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<sup>68</sup> Bovon (2002, 34) identifies further examples of occurrences of this *topos* in Judges 13; 1 Sam 1; Dan 8:15–18, 9:20–22, 10:9–11.

John add rhetorical weight to the angel's assurance that God has favoured Zechariah and Elizabeth by answering their prayers.

### 3.3.3.2 Oral-scribal intertexture with texts from Malachi

The intertexture with Mal 3:1, 22–23 (LXX) provides scriptural authentication for John being a special prophetic messenger who will prepare the way for the Lord in the role of Elijah. According to the angel, John's ministry will lead to changed lives and healed relationships. This theme recurs in the *Benedictus*, where Zechariah declares that John's role is to serve as the prophet of the Most High who will go before the Lord to prepare his way. He is to give the knowledge of salvation to God's people. Luke's rhetolgy thus implies an argumentative appeal to Malachi for confirmation.

Elijah's role had been as one who "sent kings down to destruction, . . . anointed kings to inflict retribution, . . . [and he was destined] to restore the tribes of Jacob" (Sir 48:6, 8, 10). According to 1 Kgs 19:16, Elijah had been instructed by YHWH to "anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel" to stage a revolt against king Ahab. Horsley (2006, 24) holds that these aspects of Elijah's role are the background and connotation implied in the angel's message in Luke 1:17 that John comes "with the spirit and power of Elijah" to go before the Lord, and "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17).

Verses 16–17 thus echo an eschatological emphasis implied in Mal 3:2a (LXX) (*καὶ τίς ὑπομενεῖ ἡμέραν εισόδου αὐτοῦ; ἢ τίς ὑποστήσεται ἐν τῇ ὀπτασίᾳ αὐτοῦ;*), and the message of Mal 3:22b that Elijah's coming will *πρὶν ἔλθεῖν ἡμέραν κυρίου τὴν μεγάλην καὶ ἐπιφανῆ* also deserves note in this regard. These echoes strengthen the implication that the birth of John will fulfil the prophetic eschatological hope for the reappearance of the prophet Elijah and point to the employment of prophetic discourse in Luke's rhetoric, especially in terms of the end-time references to proud and evil people being burned up by fire (Mal 2:19). Much of Mal 3:22–23 is thus recited in Luke 1:17. Luke takes on board Malachi's metonymic use of hearts in reference to "the 'affections' or 'commitments' of the fathers/ancestors" (Parsons, 2015, 36). Luke's additional phrase, *καὶ ἀπειθεῖς ἐν φρονήσει δικαίων*, does not appear to have a scriptural precedent but it provides a conceptual parallel to the preceding metonymic phrase, using a *parallelismus membrorum*, in the style so typical of the Psalms and other expressions of Hebrew poetry (see the study by Gray, 1915, 37–83). According to Johnson (1991, 33), the wording gives the sense that "as (hostile) fathers are turned to their children, so are faithless people turned to righteous thoughts." Luke hereby draws on wisdom

rhetorolect in order to stress both the promised spiritual and social impact of John's future prophetic ministry (see Johnson, 1991, 33).

The words of the angelic promise to Zechariah, referring to the future return of Elijah, seem to be inspired by a corporate firstspace memory of the prophet's body known to readers through the Jewish Scriptures. They remind readers of the ministry of the prophets of the Jewish Scriptures who communicated God's call to justice and righteousness in the days of the northern and southern kingdoms. The angel's promise of a son to Zechariah and Elizabeth expresses the hope and conviction that God is raising up a contemporary prophet to bring the nation of Israel back into a right relationship with God, manifesting a secondspace conviction that in the world of the text, John is being selected and appointed as God's prophetic agent to prepare the way of the Lord. He will be filled with the Spirit (1:15) and with the spirit and power of the prophet Elijah (1:17). He will call people to repent and to turn back to holy thoughts and actions, thus manifesting a thirdspace hope that John's ministry will bring God's justice and righteousness to God's people as recipients of a gracious divine intervention. These aspects highlight a prophetic eschatological thrust implied in the oral-scribal intertexture of narrative unit 1. The prophetic rhetorolect, achieved by means of this oral-scribal intertexture, becomes an effective force in the ascription of great honour to John in this annunciation narrative.

### **3.3.3.3 The role of the Spirit in John's life also manifests intertexture.**

Oral-scribal intertexture is again evident in John's birth narrative in respect of Luke's emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in John's future life and work. We are told that John will have a special relationship with the Holy Spirit, even from before his birth (Luke 1:15b). Nolland (1989, 31) regards "[s]uch total invasion by the Spirit of God" as "unprecedented" in the Jewish Scriptures. However, he points out that even this is soon to be surpassed by the Spirit's role in the birth of Jesus in Luke's narrative (see Luke 1:35), and in his account of the ministry of Jesus (see the discussion of Luke 3:16 below). Later in the narrative, the yet unborn infant John leaps in Elizabeth's womb when Mary visits Elizabeth during the time of their mutual pregnancies. On that occasion, Elizabeth, is also to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:41b). Furthermore, on the occasion of the circumcision and naming of John, Zechariah is also said to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:67) as he begins to declare his prophetic oracle.

The angel assures Zechariah that John will be equipped by the Spirit for his life and ministry as a prophet, going before the Lord. The promise echoes texts from the Jewish Scriptures, bringing to mind promises of a future age marked by the presence and work of the Spirit:

- In Isa 44:3b, God promises to pour out the Spirit upon Jacob's descendants.
- In Ezek 36:24–27, God promises to sprinkle clean water upon the people of Israel as they are gathered again from the nations and restored to their own land. At that time, God will remove their hearts of stone, and replace them with hearts of flesh. God's Spirit will be placed within them (Ezek 37:27a).

Luke's references to John being filled with the Holy Spirit reflect a long cultural and religious tradition in the history of Israel. These elements of oral-scribal intertexture evidence Luke's recontextualisation and reconfiguration of images from the Jewish Scriptures as he employs them to his own rhetorical ends. The difference in this regard is that the LXX intertexts speak of the Spirit coming on God's people as a whole, whereas the role of the Spirit in John's life is expressed more in terms of his individual endowment.

In these elements of oral-scribal intertexture with the Jewish Scriptures, Luke's narrative of John's birth connects John with heroes from Israel's past who were filled with the Spirit. This endowment with the Spirit took place on specific occasions, for specific tasks. One such person was Bezalel, the son of Uri, son of Hur (Exod 31:3–4), who was endowed for creative artistic work. Other examples include Othniel, Gideon, Jephthah and Saul, who were endowed for leadership and battle (Judg 3:9–10; 6:34; 11:29–33; 1 Sam 11:6). Collective and traditional memories of the Spirit-filled bodies of these ancient heroic figures (firstspace prophetic conceptualisation), facilitates the secondspace conceptualisation of people selected and chosen as prophets to serve the land and people of Israel, endowed with the Holy Spirit and empowered for effective leadership. In the space of conceptual blending, thirdspace prophetic thinking led to the conceptualisation of a ministry of a prophet like John, ushering in a new age of the Spirit when people would experience the work of the Holy Spirit in new ways.

In Luke's infancy narratives, John is portrayed as an interim figure whose ministry marks the dawning of this new prophetic age of the Spirit, connecting John to the Jewish prophetic heritage. The longing for the realisation of God's rule over Israel, facilitated in part by the ministry of John as God's great prophet (thirdspace prophetic conceptualisation), is envisioned, thus signalling the presence of prophetic rhetorolect (see Robbins, 2009, 109). The repetitive texture creates a connection between Luke's references to the Holy Spirit

here in narrative unit 1 and other references to the Spirit in the infancy narratives (Luke 1:35, 41, 67; 2:25, 26 and 27).

The repetitive texture strengthens the rhetoric in this way as Luke sets up the conceptual kernels that will be developed more fully later in his gospel (see Robbins, 2009, 298). The reference to the role of the Spirit in John's life also pre-empts Luke 3:16, in which John compares his ministry to that of the one who is to succeed him, saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Luke 3:16). These words, in turn, are taken up into the Acts 2 account of Pentecost. The endowment of John, and Jesus, with the Spirit thus forms part of the process that will bring the offer of the renewing work of the Spirit to all who will listen and place their trust in the *κύριος*. Robbins (2009, 298–310) identifies key aspects of this prophetic storyline in the following passages of Luke's Gospel:

- In Luke 4:16–7:35, Jesus re-enacts a storyline that was originally announced by Isaiah in respect of responsibilities for the poor, the captive, the blind and the oppressed (Isa 58:6; 61:1–2).
- In Luke 7:36–14:24, Jesus eats three times with Pharisees, while transforming traditional religious issues into "prophetic confrontation that focuses on social responsibility" (Robbins, 2009, 301–302); these include issues around the forgiveness of debt (Luke 7:36–50, especially 1:41), calling for society to function in a just manner (Luke 11:35–54, especially 1:42–44), and a call to reach out from positions of affluence with humility and generosity to the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind (Luke 14:1–24, especially 1:13).
- In Luke 15, a *topos* concerning God's intention to seek and save the lost, drawn from Ezek 34 (especially 1:1–12, 16), comes to the fore.
- Building on the idea of seeking and saving the lost, in 16:1–19:27 Luke's narrative elaborates, amplifies and integrates *topoi* from Deut 6–8 and Isaiah: (1) the *topos* of money and of ways in which the wealthy can serve God (16:1–18:30), and (2) seeking and saving the lost (19:1–27).

### 3.3.3.4 Oral-scribal intertexture with Dan 8–10 introduces a teaching motif.

Furthermore, Luke anchors his narrative in Israelite tradition and heritage by means of intertexture with Dan 8–10, thereby developing a recollection and teaching motif. The reference to Gabriel’s name in Luke 1:19 highlights intertexture between Luke’s account and Gabriel’s self-introduction in Dan 8–10, especially with respect to the similar *μη φοβοῦ* greeting used in Dan 10:12. Rhetorically, the echo from Dan 10 highlights the angel’s efforts to allay Zechariah’s fears. In Dan 8–10, Gabriel’s message is one of comfort (Nolland, 1989, 32) but Luke’s account implies an element of reproach in Gabriel’s self-identification. It emphasises the impropriety of Zechariah’s disbelief. Green (1997, 73) identifies in the angel’s words to Zechariah evidence of a “recollection” motif that recurs repeatedly in the Jewish Scriptures, particularly evident in the etymology of Zechariah’s name, *זְכַרְיָהּ*, which literally means “YHWH remembers”.<sup>69</sup>

There is, then, even in the use of Zechariah’s name, an echo of encouragement. The angel assures Zechariah that his prayer has been heard, and that his wife Elizabeth will give birth to a son (Luke 1:13), echoing the assurance given to Daniel that his prayers (literally “word”) have been heard (Dan 10:12 LXX). Rhetorically, these echoes emphasise God’s faithful action in remembering, firstly, Zechariah and Elizabeth’s own personal need for a child and, secondly, the needs of Israel expressed in the prayers of the assembled group of praying people waiting outside the temple (Green, 1997, 73). In this way, in the annunciation John is identified with a biblical hero and is ascribed honour in the narrative.

In Dan 8–9, Gabriel is portrayed as one who brings enlightenment as he explains and teaches the mysteries of God. Gabriel is tasked with explaining to Daniel the meaning of the vision. He informs Daniel in 9:22 (LXX) of his purpose: *ἄρτι ἐξῆλθον ὑποδείξαι σοι διάνοιαν*. If I am correct in my identification of the rhetoric of Luke’s narrative of John’s birth being conversionist in focus, then this echo from Dan 9:22 seems intended to ascribe honour to John by rooting him in the context of the Jewish Scriptures and the prophetic heritage of Israel.

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<sup>69</sup> See Gen 8:1; 19:29; 30:22; Exod 2:24; 6:5; 1 Sam 1:11, 19–20. There is perhaps also an aspect of remembering reflected in the *Magnificat* in Luke 1:54–55 (see especially the phrase: *ἀντελάβετο Ἰσραὴλ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ, μνησθῆναι ἐλέους* – v. 54), where the implied author may be including Zechariah and Elizabeth’s experience of God’s faithful remembrance in Mary’s doxology.

By implication, the rhetology of the narrative argues that, just as Gabriel's role in his appearance to Daniel was to teach and to grant understanding, so too his role in John's annunciation is to grant insight into the unique and important role John is to play as the great prophet who will go before the Lord. In the unfolding progressive texture, Luke's narrational rhetology argues ultimately that the ascription of this great honour and implied social power is increasingly transferred to Jesus as the one for whom John is eventually seen to be preparing the way. Luke seems to be attempting to assure implied readers that this unique role of John takes nothing away from his tremendous importance.

### **3.3.3.5 Oral-scribal intertexture with nazirite traditions**

A further aspect of Israelite tradition and heritage is echoed in the oral-scribal intertexture of Luke's narrative, that is, the ancient Israelite nazirite tradition. This oral-scribal intertexture is evident in the instruction that the promised child is to abstain from wine and strong drink (Luke 1:15b), echoing the practice of nazirite consecration outlined in Num 6:1–21. According to BDB (1906, 634), the various forms of the term נָזִיר in the HB, transliterated as "nazirite" in the NRSV, literally refer to one dedicated to God "by vow involving abstinence fr. intoxicants, fr. touching corpse [*sic*], and fr. cutting hair". The reference to abstention in Luke 1:15 also echoes Hannah's prayer for a son in her state of barrenness (1 Sam 1:11). Hannah vows that if God answers her prayer, she will consecrate her son to the Lord as a nazirite (1 Sam 1:11b).

In this regard, Luke's reference furthermore echoes the story of the promise of the angel of the Lord given to the wife of Manoah, of the tribe of Dan (Judg 13:1–25). She is told that she would give birth to Samson. The passage repeatedly speaks of the call for Samson's mother to abstain from wine and strong drink and for Samson himself to be a nazirite from birth (Judg 13:4–5, 7, 14). These elements of intertexture root John's call to piety in the ancient Israelite tradition of nazirite consecration, thereby ascribing honour to John in the world of the text as an exceptional leader of Israel.

### **3.3.3.6 Cultural intertexture with texts from the OTP**

There are a variety of ways in which ancient texts can be influenced by other ancient texts. At times one ancient author quotes directly from the earlier work of another ancient author. At other times there is no demonstrable generative relationship between two texts under consideration; they simply draw on a common cultural context or a common worldview. In such cases, reading the two texts in conversation with one other can enrich the interpretive process. The interpretation of one text may cast light on the interpretation of the other text.

Sometimes a later text has been created as a parody of an earlier text. In such a case, the meaning of the later text can be deemed to stand on its own merits, while an awareness of the content and message of the earlier text can unlock hidden meaning in the later text.<sup>70</sup>

Anders K. Petersen (2016) and Amy E. Richter (2016) are two interpreters who focus on the interpretive value of reading the infancy narratives in conversation with Enochic traditions. Petersen (2016, 74) avoids framing the question of the relationship of Luke's infancy narratives with the Enochic material in terms of any possible historical relationship. Rather, he explores the relationship between the two texts in terms of "the literary staging of the two textual characters of Enoch and Jesus". Focussing on Matthew's Gospel rather than on that of Luke, Richter (2016) explores the potential interpretive value of treating Matthew's birth narrative as a parody of material in the *Book of the Watchers* (1 En. 1–36), demonstrating the value of reading Matthew in the light of the *Watchers*. His study suggests to interpreters of Luke's Gospel the possibility that Luke too may be using "motifs and themes found in 1 Enoch without his using 1 Enoch in any way as a direct or indirect source.

Richter is referring to what SRI terms cultural intertexture. Luke draws on cultural values and concepts he holds in common with the author of 1 Enoch. Take for example the fact that the angel Gabriel plays such a prominent role in Luke's infancy narrative. Where does the possibility and understanding of Gabriel as a senior angelic messenger originate? Even a cursory reading of 1 Enoch reveals the prominent role played by angels in the *Watchers*. In fact, the angel Gabriel is himself referred to a number of times in the text. He is listed in 1 En. 9:1 alongside other angels who appear to be of high rank, namely, Michael, Uriel and Raphael. In 1 En. 20:1–7, a similar list is provided, including the names of Raguel and Sarakiel, and a role is assigned to each angel. This cultural information suggests an implied emphasis on the importance of Gabriel's appearance to Zechariah in Luke's Gospel, and a resultant increased degree of the honour ascribed to Zechariah and, by implication, John.

This narrative unit also manifests cultural intertexture with the *Similitudes*. *First Enoch* 40:6 lists Gabriel as the third angel, responsible for supplications before God. This text suggests

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<sup>70</sup> For example, it is widely accepted that the authors of 1 Pet 2:18–22, 2 Pet 2:2–5 and Jude 6 and 14–15 have intentionally drawn on traditions from the Ethiopic apocalypse of 1 Enoch. As Stuckenbruck and Boccaccini (2016, 3) have pointed out, "One can also advance the argument that [the Synoptic Gospels], whether understood as 'allusions' or 'quotations,' presuppose some knowledge on the part of their respective audiences regarding the source traditions being used." See the helpful discussion regarding possible ways in which a text or textual tradition like 1 Enoch might relate to the Synoptic Gospels, in Stuckenbruck and Boccaccini (2016, 3–6.)

that, culturally speaking, Gabriel could have been understood to have been the very messenger who had brought Zechariah's and Elizabeth's prayers for a child before God.

*First Enoch* 54:6 refers to the angel Gabriel, who along with the angels Michael, Raphael and Phanuel are the angels who, "on that great day of Judgment," will be tasked with casting "the armies of Azaz'el" into the furnace.<sup>71</sup> *First Enoch* 71:5–10 speaks of Gabriel, Michael, Raphael and Phanuel, along with countless other angels, who accompany the "Antecedent of Time" in going in and out of a structure in the heavens "built of crystals" and interspersed with "tongues of living fire". Angels thus feature prominently in some of these Second Temple Jewish apocalyptic texts, and echoes of these traditions and beliefs place narrative unit 1 firmly in the context of more apocalyptic expressions of Judaism from the period. Gabriel declares that he "stand[s] in the presence of God" (1:19) as part of the heavenly court, an image common in apocalyptic scenes. Although Luke's text thus reflects aspects of this apocalyptic discourse, he reconfigures it in the dominant use of prophetic rhetoric. The image of a higher-ranking angel inhabiting the presence of God in the Enochic material adds to the sense of awe and authority that may have been in view for Luke's first readers.

### 3.3.4 Sacred texture used to ascribe honour to John

Luke's account of the angel's visit creates an important strand of sacred texture in the narrative.<sup>72</sup> The description of the piety of Zechariah and Elizabeth in Luke 1:5–7 makes it clear from the outset that John descends from holy people, and this suggests that Luke is using sacred texture to develop the rhetoric of his narrative. The personal piety of his parents, so closely associated with temple ritual and the priesthood, is consistent with the description and explanation of sacred texture offered by Robbins (1996b, 121–122).

Sacred texture is also evident in the background presence of God throughout the narrative unit (see Robbins, 1996b, 120–121). God is the One who rules unseen and who is worshipped in the temple; God is the One who has sent the angel (1:19) and who has promised a miraculous conception and birth (1:13); God is the One who will make John

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<sup>71</sup> English quotations from the Jewish Pseudepigrapha are taken from J. H. Charlesworth (1983), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*.

<sup>72</sup> See my discussion of sacred texture in § 2.2.7, and the description in Robbins (1996b, 4, 120–131).

great in the sight of the Lord (1:15) and who will use him to prepare the way of the Lord (1:17).

### **3.3.5 The angelic promise, using a blend of rhetorolects**

As described in chapter 2, prophetic rhetorolect occurs in texts that bring to mind images of political kingdoms. In God's kingdom, God calls and authorises prophets to confront and challenge leaders and people living under God's rule to live righteous and just lives. As pointed out earlier in this chapter, the partial recital of Mal 3:22–23 LXX in Luke 1:15–17 creates intertexture that emphasises the important role to be played by John, and the great honour being ascribed to him in the narrative.

#### **3.3.5.1 Prophetic rhetorolect marks John's important prophetic role.**

I agree with Bovon (2002, 36) that Luke's text implies that John's greatness will be manifest in his role as a great prophet, like Elijah. Bovon (2002, 36) helpfully points his readers to the Q material of Luke 7:28, where, "under the influence of the Elijah tradition", John's greatness is again referred to, this time in the words of Jesus. His point is well taken that, whereas in 1:32, Gabriel promises Mary that Jesus is to be great in an ultimate sense, in the progressive texture it eventually becomes clear that John is to be great in his subordinate role as eschatological prophet in the sight of God (see Bovon, 2002, 36).<sup>73</sup>

John, the son promised to Zechariah and Elizabeth, is envisaged to fulfil an important future role. His selection and commission predate the occasion of his conception. The annunciation points to an argumentative-enthymematic structure that implies as its premise the presence of concepts such as "called" and "chosen", although not actually used. The case in point is the miraculous circumstances around the annunciation and conception of John, and the resulting conclusion that John has a vitally important task before him as the one called to prepare the way of the *κύριος*. The argument suggests the use of prophetic rhetorolect in the middle texture of narrative unit 1 (Robbins, 2009, 227). In the first part of verse 17, the angel declares that John is to go before the Lord. These words echo the message of Mal 3:1a (LXX), where Malachi prophesies that the messenger to be sent by God will prepare the way before God. Luke then proceeds to say that John will go in the spirit

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<sup>73</sup> Bovon (2002, 36) finds examples of such relative greatness in references to Nimrod the great hunter in Gen 10:9, and in Isaiah the great prophet in Sir 48:22 (whom Bovon erroneously refers to as Elijah).

and power of Elijah. These words echo Mal 3:22a (LXX), according to which, *ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω ὑμῖν Ἡλιαν τὸν Θεσβίτην*. The role of going before and preparing the way are apparently related. As I will seek to show in what follows, if Jesus is the one before whom John goes and whose way he prepares, John would seem in some way hereby to be subordinated to Jesus.

The part of Mal 3:1 echoed in Luke 1:17a goes on in the following verse to state that God's messenger will come in circumstances that raise the question as to who will be able to endure and stand on that day. The question implies that "no one will be able to endure and stand". Malachi 3:22a, also echoed in Luke 1:17a, goes on to clarify that the sending of the prophet Elijah will mark the imminent arrival of the great and terrible day of the Lord. The intertexture implies that John's ministry will precede an important time of reckoning. This language constitutes secondspace conceptualisation of John's selection as a prophet, called to prepare God's people for the end of time. Images of John as a great prophet appear to have been inspired by firstspace memories of past prophets who served in the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. In this way, Gabriel's promise echoes texts of the Jewish Scriptures, such as 1 Kgs 16:31–19:18 (describing Elijah's service as a prophet in Israel during the reign of Ahab, the son of Omri); and 1 Kgs 19:19–21 (telling of Elisha becoming Elijah's disciple, and eventually succeeding him as a prophet of Israel). In his narrative of John's annunciation, Luke applies an idealisation of Elijah to John. He treats Elijah as a role model for prophetic ministry.

To return again to Luke 1:17b, in the conceptual space of blending, the angel announces that John will restore family relationships between parents and children and effect a change in the actions of the disobedient. This partial recitation reconfigures Mal 3:23a LXX, which says that he will *ἀποκαταστήσει* the *καρδίαν* of parents to their children, and the *καρδίαν* of children to their parents. Luke applies Malachi's prophecy to the promised outcome of John's prophetic ministry. He is hereby creating prophetic rhetorlect in his analogy of the ministry of Elijah as model for John's envisaged ministry. This is the thirdspace conceptual possibility of the "goal of prophetic belief . . . to create a governed realm on earth where God's righteousness is enacted among all of God's people in the realm with the aid of God's specially transmitted word in the form of prophetic action and speech" (Robbins, 2009, xxvii). Honour and authority are being ascribed to John as the one who will function as the Elijah-like prophet forerunner to the *κύριος*. The intertexture thus highlights an implied confrontational edge to Luke's words that can easily be missed in a superficial reading. The fact that John's envisioned prophetic ministry will call people to a transformed

interpersonal relationship, again indicates that Luke is employing the argumentation of prophetic rhetorlect. It is also consistent with the initial identification of the implied audience of Luke's narrative of John's birth using conversionist rhetoric (Robbins, 1996a, 147).

### **3.3.5.2 Wisdom rhetorlect describes the role of John as future prophet.**

The reference to parent-child relationships in Luke 1:17 points to the additional inclusion of wisdom rhetorlect in the blend, implying an invitation to imagine households, and parents teaching their children (firstspace), and the conceptualisation of God as our Father-Creator, and of God personified as Wisdom (secondspace wisdom conceptualisation). The wisdom rhetorlect implies, furthermore, a thirdspace hope for the formation of a renewed people who would perform righteous actions resulting from good thoughts.

In narrative unit 1, wisdom rhetorlect manifests in the intertexture of 1:17 as it recites Mal 3:23a (LXX) (see § 3.3.5.2). The Malachi text draws on the imagery of parent-child relationships (firstspace thinking), as God is envisaged as a concerned heavenly parent or grandparent, acting in and through the work of John (secondspace conceptualisation). In terms of 1:16, the vision of John's future ministry has as its ultimate objective the restoration of people to God in right relationship, and the healing of relationships between parents and their children. The implication of Luke's rhetoric points to human bodies "able to produce goodness and righteousness in the world through the medium of God's wisdom, which is understood as God's light in the world" (thirdspace wisdom conceptualisation) (Robbins, 2009, xxx).

Robbins (2009, 176) sees the "household under the care of a father and mother", raising children who produce "good, righteous action and thought", as the central aspect of biblical wisdom discourse. The home and topics like "goodness", "righteousness" and "peace" provide the most common *topoi* of wisdom rhetorlect. In Luke's recitation and reconfiguration of Mal 3:23 (LXX), he appeals to the familiar context of family life, drawing on images of children nurtured by parents in caring and protective relationships. Although not specifically used by Luke, the typical *topoi* of wisdom rhetorlect are expressed in topics such as fruitfulness in relationships, and faith. The angel declares that such characteristics will mark the lives of those impacted by John's ministry. As observed earlier in the chapter, the dominant argumentative-enthymematic structure of the prophetic rhetorlect identified in this narrative unit introduces wisdom rhetorlect into the blend, in

a supportive capacity. It strengthens Luke's proposition that the prophet John will challenge God's people, calling them to become a fruitful community, and as becomes clear in the progressive texture of the narrative, ready for the coming of the *χριστός*. The angel's promise in 1:16–17 uses the metaphoric image of the "hearts" of people and the "hearts" of parents and children being turned to one another to declare that many members of the house of Israel will be brought back into a right relationship with God, and family relationships will be restored. In this context, Luke, as in the case of Malachi before him, is using the metaphoric "heart" to refer to the core of the human being. He hereby implies that the envisaged transformation will be undertaken with integrity, involving the essence of human existence.<sup>74</sup>

In narrative unit 1, Luke has thus created a blend of prophetic and wisdom rhetorolects against a background of priestly discourse to make his case for the honour ascribed to John as a prophet in the tradition of Elijah. prophetic rhetorolect is the dominant mode of discourse.

The confrontational element of the dominant prophetic rhetorolect in the blend, implied by the intertexture with Malachi and the promised impact of John's ministry that was to be manifest in people turning back to a healthy relationship with God and the restoration of family relationships, implies an actual change in conduct. This is consistent with the view of Robbins (2009, 226–227, 228–229), who uses Luke 12:13–21 as an example, in his assertion that there is often a close relationship between prophetic and wisdom rhetorolects. According to Robbins (2009, 226), "The argumentative-enthymematic structuring in early Christian prophetic rhetorolect produces confrontation first and foremost through theses of accusation and theses of blessing, both accompanied by reasons." Luke 1:16–17 uses wisdom rhetorolect to communicate the promise that John will challenge people to change their attitudes and behaviour in a way that would be more consistent with healthy family life.

I will now seek to show that the rhetorical blend also includes elements of apocalyptic rhetorolect.

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<sup>74</sup> Parsons (2015, 36) points out that Luke's use of *hearts* in Luke 1:17 fits the description of *metonymy*, "which draws from an object closely akin or an associated expression suggesting the object meant, but not called by its own name" (*Rhet. Her.* 4.32.43).

### 3.3.5.3 Apocalyptic rhetorolect emphasises the supernatural affirmation of John.

In chapter 2 of my thesis, I referred to the work of Wanamaker (2002, 134) and Carey (2012, 6–10), who have stressed that apocalyptic discourse manifests in a wide range of different *topoi* (see § 2.2.10.2). To recapitulate briefly, the following four *topoi* from Carey's list can be identified in this textual unit: (1) an interest in an alternative world; (2) encounters with heavenly intermediaries; (3) experience of visions and/or auditions; and (4) a deterministic understanding of the course of history.

Luke introduces a number of apocalyptic *topoi* into narrative unit 1, as already noted in § 3.3.3.6 in reference to cultural intertexture with pseudepigraphic texts of the period. (1) A reference occurs to an alternative world evident in Gabriel's claim to have been sent from his usual position of standing in the presence of God, to bring good news to Zechariah (1:19). (2) Zechariah encounters Gabriel, the angel as a heavenly intermediary. (3) Zechariah experiences some form of a vision and/or an audition in his encounter with Gabriel. This is alluded to again in the specific revelation given to him concerning the promise of a son (1:14–17), and by the consequential dumbness in 1:22 resulting from Zechariah's disbelief,<sup>75</sup> and the crowd's assumption that he had seen a vision. (4) A deterministic understanding of the course of history is evident in the angel's promise in 1:17 that John's ministry will result in the turning of the hearts and lives of people back to God. The presence of these apocalyptic *topoi* suggest the presence of apocalyptic rhetorolect. We have also previously noted the presence of wisdom rhetorolect. Luke's account of the ἄγγελος κυρίου visiting Zechariah (1:11a) thus points to cultural intertexture, blended with sacred texture, contributing elements of apocalyptic, wisdom and prophetic rhetorolects to the blend. The strength of the presence of prophetic discourse tends, however, to reconfigure these apocalyptic elements in the rhetorical blend towards a prophetic eschatology.

This subordinate presence of apocalyptic rhetorolect has the rhetorical effect of emphasising the supernatural and mystical presence of the divine in the birth of John and his prophetic role. He is the one who will prepare the way for the Lord. This apocalyptic rhetorolect enhances the rhetorical force of elements of prophetic and wisdom rhetorolect:

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<sup>75</sup> See § 3.3.1.4 where I refer to Nolland's suggestion of the presence of an "apocalyptic secrecy motif according to which Zechariah's silence is designed to keep God's plans from human beings until the appropriate time".

“With the spirit and power of Elijah [prophetic rhetorolect] he will go before him [prophetic rhetorolect] to turn the hearts [prophetic rhetorolect] of parents to their children [wisdom rhetorolect], and the disobedient [prophetic rhetorolect] to the wisdom of the righteous [wisdom rhetorolect], to make ready a people prepared for the Lord [prophetic rhetorolect]” (Luke 1:17). This verse is a prime example of the power of rhetorical blending. By implying an appeal to the rhetorical argumentation of two closely related discourses, this blend of prophetic and wisdom rhetorical dialects emphasise the honour ascribed to John. His great role as prophet will combine the tasks (1) of challenging God’s people to righteous lifestyles and to manifest God’s justice; and (2) of inviting them to experience God’s goodness and righteousness in their lives.

A number of elements manifest sacred texture in the text (see Robbins, 1996b, 125–131). Gabriel is an angel sent by God to announce John’s birth to Zechariah (see Robbins, 1996b, 123). The narrative requires human commitment from Zechariah (see Robbins, 1996b, 126–127). Zechariah is expected to believe the angel’s promise, but he fails to do so (1:18). Abounding in prophetic imagery, the angel’s promise that John will be filled with the Holy Spirit (1:15b), and that he will be instrumental in the restoration of the relationship of the people with their God (1:16), points to John’s important future role as prophet in Israel. John will call God’s people to commitment, and will bring a promise of redemption to God’s people as they turn back to God as a result of his ministry.

There are also a number of elements of repetitive texture that contribute to the development of this sacred texture. Repeated references to θεός (Luke 1:6, 8, 16, 19, 26, 30, 32, 35, 37, 47, 64, 68, 78; 2:13, 14, 20, 28, 38 and 40), and occurrences of the word κύριος (Luke 1:6, 9, 11, 15, 16, 17, 25, 28, 32, 38, 45, 46, 58, 66, 68, and 2:9 [twice], 15, 22, 23 [twice], 24, 26 and 39) point again to the presence of sacred texture. This repetition of κύριος warrants careful consideration in view of the way in which the word is used in the LXX to translate the name of God, יהוה. As I will discuss in greater detail in § 4.3.1.3 below, it is risky to conclude too quickly that the repeated references to a word that is often used as an honorific title for God, and later overtly applied to Jesus in the infancy narratives, is then applied to Jesus in the divine sense. Suffice to say at this point that, in this way, the author is weaving repetitive texture, oral-scribal and cultural intertexture, and sacred texture into the rhetorical blend. An emphasis on the Divine is clearly established hereby.

This sacred texture is employed by Luke to enhance the rhetorical force of the rhetology of the narrative. Grundmann (1976, 74–75) explains that in the Greek and Hellenistic world, ἄγγελος, could refer in the human sense to an “emissary”, tasked with concluding treaties

and delivering official messages, or to a heavenly messenger such as Hermes. Thus, even Greek readers of Luke's text unfamiliar with Jewish angelology, would have understood Gabriel to have been some form of divine envoy. Luke is building a picture of the unfolding of a portentous event. As will be discussed later in this chapter, Luke's rhetology in this regard forms an important ingredient of his rhetoric.

### **3.3.6 Gabriel's announcement of John manifests ideological texture.**

A blend of prophetic, priestly, apocalyptic and miracle rhetorolects, used to develop the implied rhetology of Luke's narrative of John's annunciation and birth, is evident in the angelic visitation. Luke hereby achieves an emphasis on the supernatural presence of God in the events that unfold around John's annunciation and birth. This rhetorical blend implies God's blessing on John's prophetic role in the narrative.

#### **3.3.6.1 Ideological texture promises John will be a fitting herald.**

As he develops his rhetology, Luke builds his case for an authoritative connection between John's annunciation and birth, and the faith and religious piety of the people of Israel that will be an outcome of his ministry, thereby ascribing honour to John in his role as prophet. Even though there has heretofore been no mention of *χριστός*, as part of the overall developing ideological texture, Luke demonstrates John's authority and importance as a fitting herald to the coming of the *χριστός*, as will gradually become clear in the progressive texture of the narrative. In the earlier part of this chapter, I have explored Luke's development of this notion, achieved by interpreting John's ministry in the light of Mal 3:1–2 and 22–23 (LXX). Effectively, as becomes increasingly clear, the important role of John the prophet as the one who goes before the *κύριος* in this way, *legitimizes* the messianic status of Jesus.<sup>76</sup> Luke's narrative hereby demonstrates John's greatness. This *legitimation* is achieved in part by means of a rhetorical process of pre-emption and *rationalisation* in Luke's account of the angel's annunciation to Zechariah, and later by means of his account of John's prophetic role in the wilderness region of the Jordan River. His prophetic ministry is destined to result from the fact that, "even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Luke 1:16). This work of the Holy Spirit in and through John's life will result in his being able to "turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God" (Luke 1:16). John's status as a ministering prophet is further *legitimated* in Luke's discourse through a process

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<sup>76</sup> For a definition of *legitimation*, see § 2.2.8.2, especially Figure 3.

of *narrativisation* that expresses intertexture with Mal 3:22–23 (LXX).<sup>77</sup> This intertexture connects John to Elijah, a familiar and influential prophet in Israelite history: “the spirit and power of Elijah will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17). Furthermore, Luke’s portrayal of John as the fulfilment of Mal 3:22–23 (LXX) is portrayed as *standardised* fact, with no debate. The various prophetic symbols align for John in the narrative: the promise of Malachi, his identification with Elijah, and his promised role in turning the hearts and lives of people (1:17), as well as the prophetic function of those around him (Gabriel, Zechariah, Elizabeth) and the promised role of the Holy Spirit in his life. All these elements anchor John as he is *unified* with God’s school of prophets.

Luke again hereby ascribes honour and authority to John in the world of the text as the great prophet who is to prepare the way for the Lord and, as becomes clear in the progressive texture, to prepare the way for the *κύριος*. By rooting his account of the birth of John in the ancient references to Elijah and recitation from Malachi, Luke implies claims to *legitimacy* and *unification* embedded in his narrative of John’s birth. He uses these rhetorical elements to ascribe honour to John in his important role as a prophetic herald of the Lord, who is to challenge God’s people and call them to a new way of life. This narrational process requires a careful ideological move on the part of Luke. On the one hand, he must avoid *expurgating* or *othering* John as an enemy. Yet, since John appears to have spawned groups that competed with the early Christians, Luke needs to appeal to John’s followers in such a way as to win their trust and hopefully convince them of his message about Jesus the Messiah. In this regard, his ideological approach at this point seems to be to *subsume* John into the Christian story by means of the mode of *unification*, bringing John into the Christian storyline despite his differences. This would explain the absence of any reference to John’s subordination to Jesus in Luke’s account of his annunciation.

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<sup>77</sup> For a definition of *narrativisation* (a strategy in the mode of *legitimation*), *unification*, and *standardisation* (a strategy in the mode of *unification*), see § 2.2.8.2, especially Figure 3.

### 3.3.6.2 Ideological texture sets up a trajectory evident again in Luke's use of Q material.

This progressive texture sets up a trajectory in the relationship between the two characters that continues into the Q material used by Luke in 3:16–17, when John declares that, although he baptises with water, one more powerful than he is coming, one whose sandals thongs he will not be worthy of untying. This coming one will play an eschatological prophetic role as imparter of the Holy Spirit and as dispenser of judgement.

The Q material used in chapter 3 thus leaves no doubt that John is subordinate to Jesus, whom John declares to be more powerful than he, by means of this honour-shame *topos* (“I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals.” – Luke 3:16). In Luke 7:22–35, Luke again employs Q material to reassert the subordination of John to Jesus. In the Q material of Luke 7, John sends two of his disciples to Jesus, having received report of Jesus’ ministry. They seek confirmation of the identity and mission of Jesus, asking if he is “the one to come” or if they ought rather to wait for another. Jesus replies by pointing them to essential elements of his ministry regarding healings and proclamation of the gospel to the poor that fulfil the promises of Isa 61:1–2a.

This Q material poses the question as to why John and his disciples seem to be confused about the relationship between John and Jesus. The emphasis in Luke’s infancy narratives on the honour ascribed to John in the opening narrative unit points to possible layers of historical intertexture in the Q material and suggests the role that this Q material may play in the rhetology of Luke’s Gospel. John’s disciples, apparently convinced of John’s honour, appear reluctant to accept Jesus’ superiority to John. Again, I must stress that the rhetology implied in Jesus’ response to John’s disciples, points to Jesus having fulfilled the promises of Isa 61:1–2a.

In the oral-scribal intertexture of Luke 4:18–19, Luke has already applied the promises of Isa 61:1–2a to Jesus in his prophetic role. The implied argument is that Jesus is clearly the one for whom John and his disciples have been waiting since the ministry of Jesus is so clearly marked by the signs of liberation and healing referred to in Isa 61:1–2a.

In the Q material of Luke 7:26, Jesus reminds his implied readers of the honour ascribed to John by explaining that John is in fact more than a prophet. Quoting from Mal 3:1, Jesus says, “This is the one about whom it says, ‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you’” (Luke 7:27). Rhetorically, this oral-scribal intertexture in the Q material reminds Luke’s implied readers that Jesus is the one for

whom John prepared the way, thus picking up on the major theme in the progressive texture of Luke's infancy narratives. In Luke 7, it has become clear that the progressive texture in Luke's rhetolgy has pointed conclusively to Jesus as the one for whom John prepared the way, "[w]ith the spirit and power of Elijah", just as the angel had promised in Luke 1:17.

Furthermore, the Q material clarifies the meaning and implication of Zechariah's statement to his new born son in the *Benedictus* ("you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways . . ." – 1:77). In the light of the Q material in Luke 7, there can be no doubt that the message of the progressive texture of Luke's infancy narratives sets up a trajectory that subordinates John to Jesus as the one who prepares the way for him. The Q material thus overtly states what is argued in the progressively unfolding rhetolgy of the infancy narratives: greater honour and social power are ascribed to Jesus than to John, and this prepares the way for Luke's proclamation of Jesus as God's υἱός, σωτήρ, χριστός and κύριος.

The subordination of John to Jesus is again evident in Acts 18:25; 19:1–7 where disciples of John are required to be re-baptised in the name of Jesus in order to be fully recognised as legitimate disciples of Jesus, hereby once again declaring the superior honour and spiritual authority ascribed to Jesus.

Luke thus prepares the way in his infancy narratives for his portrayal of the relationship between John and Jesus in the rest of his gospel and Acts. He is the only gospel author to link John and Jesus together as family. Doing so provides him with the rhetorical context to develop his rhetolgy, arguing, on the one hand, for a close relationship between John and Jesus, while at the same time ascribing greater honour to Jesus and establishing an asymmetrical honour-power relationship between the two.

### **3.4 CLOSING TEXTURE: ELIZABETH CONCEIVES AS PROMISED (LUKE 1:24–25).**

In Luke 1:24–25, Luke provides the closing texture to his annunciation narrative, introduced by a chronological link that bridges time: Μετὰ δὲ ταύτας τὰς ἡμέρας (1:24). Having completed his priestly duties, Zechariah returns home and his wife Elizabeth conceives, just as the angel has promised, her conception (presumably) occurring through natural sexual means. It is a kind of second hand miracle for Elizabeth only has contact with the angel through Zechariah. Culturally it is unlikely that Luke is arguing that the barrenness in fact lies with Zechariah although it would be a possible interpretation of the narrative. It is more likely that Luke is saying that Zechariah's body is the means by which

the miraculous transformation occurs in Elizabeth's barren body. His contact with the angel enables her to conceive.

Luke may be implying that her withdrawal into seclusion is motivated by "a sense of privacy" in the light of God's graciousness shown to her in her old age (Nolland, 1989, 33). As in the case of Zechariah, who was struck dumb after his encounter with the angel, Elizabeth too is silent about the events that have come to pass in Luke's narrative, staying secluded in her home. The narrative concludes by recounting Elizabeth's recognition and acknowledgement of God's action in her pregnancy (1:25). Consistent with the patriarchal social and cultural values of ancient Mediterranean society, the barrenness is indiscriminately attributed to the women in the marriage partnership. She acknowledges God's goodness, demonstrated in the removal of her social shame, the shame associated with the barrenness of a woman (1:25). Her social honour is thus restored, even though, by describing her and Zechariah as "righteous before God" and "living blamelessly", Luke has made it clear that her barrenness not evidence of God's punishment (1:6-7). Nevertheless, according to Luke's narrative, she remains in seclusion. In the world of the text, Luke may be allowing for the disappointment of past miscarriages. Elizabeth's acceptance of the Lord's intervention in her life serves as an example for readers of a faith-filled response to the angelic promises,<sup>78</sup> whereas, by contrast, Zechariah's lack of faith implies a warning to them.

Luke then describes the fulfilment of the angel's prophecy, telling of Elizabeth's conception. There are a number of elements of social and cultural texture in the text. This closing texture of the narrative unit climaxes with a return to the *zone of attributed speech* in respect of Elizabeth's doxology (1:25). In terms of intertexture, Nolland (1989, 34) suggests that Elizabeth's doxology echoes the experiences of Sarah (Gen 21:1-7) and Rachel (Gen 30:22-24) in the Jewish Scriptures. In both these cases, the women miraculously conceive and bear sons, and respond in grateful praise to God. The reference to the removal of Elizabeth's "disgrace" of childlessness (1:25) also echoes the following passages from the Jewish Scriptures:

- Hagar's contempt for Sarah in Gen 16:1-4;

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<sup>78</sup> Later in the narrative in Luke 1:46-55, Mary responds in similar fashion to the angel's promise of the birth of Jesus.

- Rachel's barrenness and her complex relationship with her husband Jacob and the mothers of his children prior to the conception and the birth of her own son, Joseph, in Gen 29:31–30:24;
- Hannah's sense of personal worthlessness in 1 Sam 1:1–20 in view of her barrenness, and the subsequent birth of Samuel (see discussion in Nolland, 1989, 34).

Though not a typical healing story, the account of Elizabeth's conception does manifest miracle rhetorict. Miracle rhetorict, as described in chapter 2 of my thesis, uses words that inspire images of malfunctioning bodies, in this case that of Elizabeth, which is miraculously transformed in her conception. In miracle discourse, such healing and transformation is usually effected through the bodily presence of a person acting as an agent of God's transformative power. In the case of Elizabeth, the healing comes through angelic rather than human agency. This transformation stems from a "space of relation" between Elizabeth's malfunctioning body (firstspace conceptualisation), and the conceptualisation of God as Divine Healer who renews human life (secondspace conceptualisation).

The miraculous transformation of Elizabeth's body, in fulfilment of Gabriel's promise, marks the realisation of the thirdspace conceptualisation of miracle rhetorict (see Robbins, 2009, xxiv–xxv, 109, 111). This miracle rhetorict points to the divine action manifest in the account of the birth and future mission of John as God's great prophet, called to bring people back into right relationship with one another and with God. The miracle discourse thus serves rhetorically to highlight the honour ascribed to John. Prescendi (2011, 5), in the study on the Italic birth myths of well-known ancient people, shows how the extraordinary circumstances described in ancient myths are used to "confer authority on humans", since "a man or a woman created by a divine power is closer to the world of the gods; their half-human, half divine nature ensures their superiority." This insight serves to highlight the great authority and honour that an ancient Mediterranean audience would have understood Luke to be ascribing to John in his account of his miraculous conception and, later, as I seek to show in chapter 4, also in respect of that of Jesus.

### **3.5 THE BIRTH OF JOHN (LUKE 1:57–66)**

I will now proceed with an analysis of narrative unit 4, directly following the *Magnificat* in 1:39–56 and structurally juxtaposed with narrative unit 6 (Luke 2:1–7 [21]). In terms of the inner texture of this narrative unit, Luke again employs opening-middle-closing texture and

pattern to structure the passage. The chronological link phrase in 1:57a constitutes the opening texture. The middle texture comprises a section in 1:57b–58 that describes John as honoured by the promise of a prophetic role, and a second section in versus 59–64 that describes John being honoured by rites of passage. The closing texture can be identified in 1:65–66. The inner texture of Luke’s account of the birth of John manifests narrational texture, opening-middle-closing texture and repetitive texture, as well as in the use of sensory-aesthetic texture written in the *zones of self-expressive speech and purposeful action* (see Malina, 2001 [1981], 69).

### **3.5.1 Opening texture: A chronological link phrase (Luke 1:57a)**

The opening texture of narrative unit 4 comprises a transitional phrase in 1:57a, declaring that the time has come for Elizabeth to give birth to her promised child. One could argue that the opening texture runs through to 1:66, since the whole section deals in some way with John’s birth and rite of passage. However, in the light of the clear parallels between the narrative of the births of John and Jesus, the account of John’s birth in 1:57b–58 forms a more obvious parallel with the section dealing with the birth of Jesus in Luke 2:6–7. The section in 1:59–66, dealing specifically with John’s rite of passage, also then forms a parallel with the account of Jesus’ circumcision in Luke 2:21. On these grounds, I am treating 1:57a as brief opening texture, followed by two sections of middle texture in 1:57b–58 and 59–64. The closing summary in 1:65–66 creates the closing texture.

### **3.5.2 Middle texture (A): John is born as promised (Luke 1:57b–58).**

The rhetography created by the references to life in a small rural village in 1:39–40 and 57–58 inspires the reader to imagine a village where the baby is delivered in Zechariah and Elizabeth’s own home. In small town communities, word is expected to travel rapidly among neighbours and friends. Luke’s writing invites the reader to imagine a group of community members, having received word of John’s birth, gathering at the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth. The text invites the reader to imagine some community members standing outside the house, waiting for an opportunity to see the new born infant. Perhaps, more intimate friends and relatives can be imagined inside the home accompanying the family. Together, they rejoice at the birth of John, celebrating God’s blessing on the lives of Zechariah and Elizabeth. Luke 1:58 describes the neighbours and relatives, happy and sharing in the joy of John’s parents, speaking of the mercy that God has demonstrated to Elizabeth. This brings me to the middle texture (B) of narrative unit 4.

### **3.6 MIDDLE TEXTURE (B): RITES OF PASSAGE HONOUR JOHN (LUKE 1:59–66).**

#### **3.6.1 A range of rhetorical textures enlivens the account.**

The account of John's circumcision in Luke 1:59–66 manifests several rhetorical textures, including repetitive texture and social and cultural texture. In the world of the narrative, Zechariah and Elizabeth's neighbours intend to circumcise John on the eighth day of his life (Luke 1:59; see Lev 12:3), since he is a Jewish boy-child. This detail expresses cultural intertexture with the religious and cultural practices of Second Temple Jewish communities of the day, and oral-scribal intertexture with the Jewish Scriptures. The intertexture roots the events in the history and faith of Israel. As a rite of entry into the covenant between God and Abraham, circumcision had been practiced since patriarchal days (Gen 17:9–14; 21:4; Lev 12:3). It represented an obligation placed on the child to fulfil the commandments of the law.

The association of the act of naming the child with the rite of circumcision, as implied in Luke's wording, causes some intertextual difficulties. Marshall (1978, 88) and Nolland (1989, 79) point out that the association of naming a child at the time of circumcision is unattested elsewhere in Jewish literature until the eighth century C.E., when the rabbinic text *Pirke Rabbi Eleazer* 48 refers to Moses being named at his circumcision. The more popular practice at the time was for a son to be given the name of his grandfather (Marshall, 1978, 88; Nolland, 1989). Teresa Reeve (2011), in her article on the rites of passage of Luke 1–4, points out that the formal naming of a child was an important aspect of the Roman birthing rites that would have been familiar to Luke's readers. She points out that, in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman worlds, little was done without proper ritual to mark the occasion: "Societally ordained rites of passage accompanied an individual's movement into each new stage of the human life cycle from infancy and puberty, to betrothal and marriage, to the final funereal good-byes" (Reeve, 2011, 244). Luke is either attesting to an otherwise undocumented practice, or he is conflating his knowledge of two unrelated cultural practices in his narrative, thereby making inaccurate assumptions regarding Jewish cultural naming practice. Whichever the case, he achieves important progressive texture by building tension in preparation for Zechariah's recovery from his muteness and his declaration of John's name as commanded by the angel Gabriel.

The repetitive texture in respect of rites of passage in the opening chapters of Luke's Gospel is also quite remarkable. This is consistent with the observation of Reeve (2011, 259) that "Luke-Acts gives unusual attention to rites of passage in comparison with the other

canonical Gospels and other narrative literature of the day.” Later in the infancy narratives, Luke’s account of the birth of Jesus also includes reference to a circumcision and naming rite (2:21), but in the case of Jesus the rite is succeeded by an account of two additional rites: (1) his presentation at the temple (2:22–23) and (2) the offering of a sacrifice of either two turtle doves or two young pigeons (2:24). Mentions of rites of passage in the rest of the early chapters of Luke’s Gospel beyond these infancy narratives include his boyhood visit to the temple at age twelve (2:41–51), and the references to John’s baptism of Jesus in Luke 3. In addition, Luke 4 describes the launch of the public ministry of Jesus, which took place in a synagogue. Reeve (2011, 245, 259) regards this concentrated emphasis on rites of passage as a remarkable use of ritual to demonstrate in tangible ways that the important events that took place at the dawn of this new age are “properly begun and grounded in tradition”. Luke’s account of John’s circumcision and naming thus prepares the way for this important emphasis later in Luke’s Gospel in chapters 3 and 4. I turn now to the expression of sensory-aesthetic texture in the narrative of John’s circumcision, used by Luke to add further layers of meaning to this narrative unit.

In the *zone of self-expressive speech*, Elizabeth intervenes when the community wants to give the infant his father’s name (1:60). She is adamant that her son be named “John”, in obedience to the angel’s instruction to Zechariah, even though Zechariah had been struck dumb as a result of his reluctance to believe the angel’s promise. The neighbours and relatives then express their dismay, since the name John is unknown to Zechariah’s family. In confusion, they look to Zechariah for confirmation. To their amazement, Zechariah supports Elizabeth’s name selection. Luke tells of Zechariah writing on a tablet, declaring the infant’s name as John (1:63). The surprise of the neighbours and friends is explicable within the context of the kinship values of honour-shame Mediterranean culture. The break in tradition with the naming of John is consistent with the break in tradition involved in John’s following a prophetic rather than a priestly vocation in Luke’s narrative (see discussion of John’s prophetic role in § 3.3.5.1 above). Examples of the Second Temple Jewish practice of naming a son after his father emphasise the departure from expected social and cultural practice in the world of the text. Examples of this practice include the following: (1) the Book of Tobias refers to Tobias, the son of Tobias (Tob 1:9); (2) Josephus refers to his great-grandfather named Matthias Curtus who was the son of Matthias, called Ephlias (*Vita* 1.4); (3) he also refers to Antipater (father of Herod the Great), formerly known as Antipas (*Ant* 14.10); and (4), he refers to Ananus, son of Ananus, who was made high priest (*Ant* 20.197).

Though struck with muteness as a consequence of his disbelief, Zechariah's ratification of his wife's insistence on naming the child John triggers a further miracle in the narrative as Zechariah's faculty of speech is restored (v.64a). Parsons (2015, 13–14, 45), having made a case for the canonical gospels to be classified as encomiastic biography, goes on to argue that Luke's description of the restoration of Zechariah's faculty of speech is consistent with the references to spectacular events on the occasion of the birth of ancient heroic figures. For example, according to Pseudo-Hermogenes, "You will mention also any marvellous occurrences at birth, for example from dreams or signs or things like that" (*The Preliminary Exercise* attributed to Hermoenus, *On Encomion*, 15, translated by Kennedy, 2003, 82; see also Nicolaus, *Prog.* 51, 59–60). Note how the initial divine act of retribution resulting in Zechariah's muteness is now reversed in the *zone of self-expressed speech*. The first thing Zechariah does with his reawakened power of speech is to declare his praises to God (1:64b). Again, the sensory-aesthetic texture rhetorically invites readers to imagine these events and to enter into the celebration of praise to God.

God is honoured in this event, but the social honour that family and friends intend to ascribe to John and his parents in the world of the text, in the naming of the infant and through the rites of passage, is somewhat thwarted by the break in naming tradition. The narrative of John's birth began with the ascription of honour in Luke's description of John's pious priestly parents and the account of the angelic annunciation in the temple declaring John's great prophetic role. However, this is followed by a hint in narrative unit 3 suggesting that John's ascribed honour is on the decline. When Mary visits Elizabeth, the yet unborn infant John leaps in his mother's womb and Elizabeth honours Mary, the mother of Jesus as ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ κυρίου μου.

### **3.6.2 Closing texture: John is destined for a great role in relation to Jesus (Luke 1:65–66).**

In the closing texture of narrative unit 4, Luke describes the response of neighbours and relatives to these strange and miraculous events. The closing texture again manifests sensory-aesthetic texture expressed in the *zone of emotion-fused thought*. Luke describes the fear, or perhaps reverence, that fills the neighbours (Luke 1:65a). In the *zone of self-expressive speech*, the neighbours spread the news of John's birth far and wide (1:65b). Luke describes the positive response of all who hear them (1:66a). The omniscient narrator responds that, surely, God's hand was upon this new born infant (1:66b) (Nolland, 1989, 80). As Parsons (2015, 46) puts it, "John's nurture and training had a divine as well as a human dimension." All of these descriptions manifest sensory-aesthetic texture that

enlivens Luke's text and potentially help to captivate his readers in active engagement with his narrative of John's birth.

### **3.7 ZECHARIAH RESPONDS IN THE WORDS OF THE *BENEDICTUS* (LUKE 1:67–80).**

The fifth narrative unit in Luke's narrative of the birth of John recounts Zechariah's doxology in response to John's birth in the words of the *Benedictus* in 1:68–79. Zechariah's doxology manifests sensory-aesthetic texture in the *zone of self-expressive speech*, recounted in first person speech in 1:67–79. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Zechariah bursts into prophetic doxology, declaring the future royal role of the one who is the *κέρας σωτηρίας ἡμῶν ἐν οἴκῳ Δαυὶδ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ*, and the mighty intervention of God in Israel's future.

#### **3.7.1 Zechariah is filled with the Spirit (Luke 1:67).**

As I have argued in respect of narrative unit 1, the reference to Zechariah being filled with the Holy Spirit at the time of John's birth (Luke 1:67) forms part of Luke's wider emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in John's life. As I have sought to show in respect of narrative unit 1, this emphasis on the Spirit points to the use of prophetic rhetorolect in the opening texture. The rhetology being developed by means of these references to the Holy Spirit is advancing a case for the dawning of the age of the Spirit, marking the intervention of God at the end of days, with possible echoes of texts from the Jewish Scriptures (Joel 2:28–29; Ezekiel 36:27). The prophetic rhetorolect invites the reader to envisage a thirdspace new reality in the conceptual space of blending that involves God working in new ways among the people of God through John's ministry. Israel is about to manifest the justice of God as a fruit of the life and work of this great new born prophet.

#### **3.7.2 Zechariah subordinates John to Jesus in doxology (Luke 1:68–79).**

The event of John's birth is honoured in the words of Zechariah's *Benedictus*. Although not explicit in this respect, the wider context of progressive texture reveals that the *κύριος* before whom John will go and whose way he is to prepare, is Jesus. As becomes increasingly clear in my analysis of the narrative of the birth and infancy of Jesus in chapter 4, the frequent use of royal *topoi* in the narrative, understood in the light of the progressive texture, shows that the birth of Jesus marks the birth of a royal figure who eventually surpasses John in honour and power. By the angel referring to Jesus as *σωτήρ ὃς ἐστὶν χριστός κύριος* later in Luke 2:11, the narrative eventually makes explicit the fact that John's great ascribed honour is derived from his role and function as the one who prophetically goes before Jesus the *χριστός* to prepare his way. In this sense, John's ascribed honour is on the

decrease, as already suggested in Elizabeth's acknowledgement of Mary as the *μήτηρ τοῦ κυρίου μου* (1:43). By Zechariah's implied subordination of his son to Jesus in the *Benedictus*, in the implied recognition of Jesus's role by using royal *topoi*, and by addressing his son as the prophet of the Most High who will *προπορεύσει γὰρ ἐνώπιον κυρίου ἐτοιμάσαι ὁδοὺς αὐτοῦ* (Luke 1:76), ascribed honour in the narrative is being transferred to Jesus.

In 1:72–74, the *Benedictus* declares that God will fulfil the ancient promises and will remember the holy covenant concluded with Abraham. As Parsons (2015, 47) points out, it is appropriate for Zechariah to recall God's covenantal faithfulness to Abraham on the occasion of John's circumcision. Luke's text hereby subtly manifests oral-scribal intertexture with ancient Israelite practices and the narrative of John's birth and ministry continues to be anchored in the Jewish Scriptures. The one who prepares the way for the *κύριος* in this way continues to play an honoured role.

### **3.7.2.1 Social and cultural texture reveals Israel's divine patron.**

The *Benedictus* manifests layers of social and cultural texture. The language of patron-client contractual relationships is here assigned to God as the faithful patron of Israel. As benefactor of God's people, God has granted them seemingly abundant favour by the provision of redemption and salvation (1:68–69). In fulfilment of God's covenant with them, they have been sovereignly rescued and delivered from their enemies. They have been shown great mercy. God, the divine patron, has acted on behalf of client-Israel in order that the nation might serve God fearlessly in holiness and righteousness (Luke 1:74–75a).

### **3.7.2.2 Oral-scribal intertexture manifests prophetic rhetorlect.**

Luke's text invites readers familiar with the LXX to recognise and identify with the praise and prayer language of the psalms of the Jewish Scriptures. Verse 68 begins with recitations from Pss 72:18; 106:48 and 1 Kgs 1:48, and then proceeds to echo Pss 41:4 and 111:9.<sup>79</sup> The composer of the *Benedictus* also seems to assume that his implied readers will recognise allusions to the prophetic hopes that shaped Israel's national identity. These allusions include echoes of the Exodus account of Israel's liberation from Egypt. The allusions imply firstspace prophetic conceptualisation in the collective memory of Israel of the liberation of

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<sup>79</sup> For a study on unsolicited oracles in the ancient Mediterranean world, see the relevant chapter in Aune (1983, 66–75).

Israel from a life of slavery in the land of Egypt under the rule of Pharaoh, stirring up secondspace hope for a prophetic future establishment of God’s rule over Israel. In 1:69, Zechariah’s doxology thus employs prophetic rhetorolect that envisages thirdspace conceptualisation of a renewed and transformed lived-space, to be realised in the age of the Spirit. This is a vision that challenges and confronts religious and political leaders who have drifted away from God, calling them to pursue God’s justice, righteousness and mercy as a manifestation of God’s rule over the nation of Israel. As they respond appropriately, they will be rescued from their enemies and God’s covenant will be re-established (1:70–74) (thirdspace prophetic conceptualisation in the space of blending) (Robbins, 2009, xxix, 109–110; 2010b, 201). Again, this is consistent with the earlier identification of the discourse of the narrative of John’s birth as predominantly conversionist in its rhetorical appeal.

The royal *topos* used in 1:69 speaks of a *κέρας σωτηρίας* who is raised up in the *οἶκῳ Δαυίδ*, that will bring about transformed reality. The reference to the *κέρας σωτηρίας* appears to be a direct recitation of references to God as *κέρας σωτηρίας* in 2 Sam 22:3 and Ps 17:3 (LXX). In Ps 74:10 (LXX), Jer 31:25 and Zech 2:1–2, *κέρας* appears to refer to “strength” or to “strong entities” and this might explain the translation of *κέρας σωτηρίας* as “a mighty saviour” in the NRSV. Both occurrences of *κέρας σωτηρίας* in the Jewish Scriptures take the form of a divine title connected with the numerous biblical references to God as Saviour, and to God’s saving acts (see, for example, Ps 3:8–9 LXX; Isa 43:11; 45:21–22). This supports an argument for *κέρας σωτηρίας* in 1:69 being used to refer in some way to a manifestation of divine salvation in the *οἶκῳ Δαυίδ*.<sup>80</sup>

Zechariah’s doxology praises God for having shown care for Israel and for setting Israel’s redemption in motion by sending John.<sup>81</sup> This doxological response to the birth of John uses prophetic discourse to communicate the fulfilment of ancient prophetic hopes that have shaped Israel’s national identity. As we have seen, at the same time, Zechariah’s doxology confidently celebrates the fulfilment of prophetic hope in the birth of the *κέρας σωτηρίας* of the house of David, that is, a Davidic *σωτήρ* for Israel, come to save God’s people (1:69). The *Benedictus*, in this royal Davidic reference to John’s successor, manifests a national and

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<sup>80</sup> The messianic use of sprout/branch/horn are well attested at Qumran. See the helpful summary of occurrences provided by Michael J. Wilkins (2012, 117–118).

<sup>81</sup> See the valuable discussion in Parsons (2015, 46).

earthly focus appropriate to prophetic rhetorolect rather than to the more cosmic dimensions of apocalyptic rhetorolect. This prophetic rhetorolect reaffirms the pending fulfilment of Israel's eschatological hope. The doxology declares that God's tender mercy will be made manifest amongst the people of God (1:78b). The future transformed lived experience of God's people as beneficiaries of these promises (thirdspace prophetic thinking) will be the realisation of eternal new life to be manifest in light in the place of darkness, and the revelation of God that will provide God's people with guidance in the ways of peace (1:79b).

An element of repetitive texture evident in the *Benedictus* is also important in terms of the understanding of honour-shame categories on the part of the implied audience of John's infancy narrative. Zechariah's doxology honours John in relation to the honour shown to God and, by implication, Jesus, specifically as the Redeemer of the *people of God*. In 1:68 the Lord God who is blessed in the doxology is identified in terms of a relationship to ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ. In 1:69, God is honoured as the One who has looked upon τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ with favour. Zechariah identifies himself as a representative of God's people Israel, singing that God has raised up a Saviour "for us" in order that "we" would be saved (1:71). God has fulfilled his promises to πατέρων ἡμῶν (1:72), and it is again *we* who have been saved and rescued from our enemies (1:73). In 1:77, it is τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ who have been given the knowledge of salvation by means of their sins being forgiven them, and in 1:78, Zechariah identifies himself with those upon whom God's tender mercy will break.

This emphasis on the people of God confirms the earlier observation that the honour ascribed to John in Luke's narrative of his birth is rhetorically linked to the heritage of Israel, thereby emphasising his vital role in salvation history, while being directed towards preparing the way for the κύριος. God will use John prophetically to prepare a people who are to "receive special divine benefits that come to them" (Robbins, 2009, xxvi).

### **3.7.2.3 Evidence of the use of a royal *topos* and prophetic rhetorolect in the *Benedictus***

As we have seen, the royal Davidic *topos* expressed in the phrase ἐν οἴκῳ Δαυὶδ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ manifests distinct repetitive texture in the Gospel of Luke (see, 1:27, 32; 2:4, 11; 3:31; 18:38, 39; 20:41–44). The intertexture with Ps 131:17 LXX (ἐκεῖ ἐξανατελῶ κέρασ, τῷ Δαυὶδ

ἡτοίμασα λύχνον τῷ χριστῷ μου),<sup>82</sup> suggests the presence of a distinctively messianic *topos* in 1:69 and a close relationship between Jesus and King David is beginning to become clear in Luke's rhetoric, consistent with similar points that have been made in the progressive texture of the annunciation and conception accounts of John and Jesus, in Mary's visit to Elizabeth, and in Mary's *Magnificat*.

This observation greatly weakens the argument put forward by Maluf (2009, 53–56) that *κέρας σωτηρίας* in 1:69 refers to King David himself and never goes beyond the hope of the Jewish Scriptures. He bases his case on a number of dubious arguments. His observation that nowhere else in the NT or other early Christian literature is *κέρας σωτηρίας* used of Jesus, or used with a messianic sense, does not necessarily exclude such possibilities. It is possible that Luke has purposefully reconfigured the more common militant metaphoric use of *κέρας* to apply it to Jesus. In any case Rev 5:6 uses *κέρας* in reference to the risen Jesus and, since Luke is writing from a post-resurrection perspective, the possibility of Luke also applying *κέρας* to Jesus cannot be precluded.

The argument of Maluf on grammatical grounds that the phrase *κέρας σωτηρίας* ought to be translated as “a salvation of formidable potency” rather than as “a mighty saviour” (as in the NRSV), attempts to exclude the possibility of any directly personal reference to Jesus. However, the usual metaphoric use of the term in the LXX and in the Book of Revelation would not preclude a metaphoric reference to a personal Davidic Saviour.

It would also not be surprising for *σωτηρίαν ἐξ ἐχθρῶν ἡμῶν* to be intended metaphorically in a prophetic oracle the likes of the *Benedictus*. If Luke's rhetorical strategy in the *Benedictus* manifests a purposeful but gradual subordination of John to Jesus, as is evident in the progressive texture of the two infancy narratives, it would make sense for Luke to emphasise Jesus over and above John by referring first to the *κέρας σωτηρίας ἡμῶν ἐν οἴκῳ Δαυὶδ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ* rising up in 1:68–75, only then to proceed to the mention of his forerunner in 1:76.

Maluf (2009, 56–57) further argues that 1:68 and 69 refer to two distinct periods in Israel's history (the Exodus and King David's rule) and that 1:69 thus refers historically to God's saving acts in and through King David and his household, but this ignores the possibility of

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<sup>82</sup> See also Ezek 29:21 “Ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ ἀνατελεῖ κέρας παντὶ τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰσραηλ,” for possible intertexture in respect of the sprouting forth of a “horn of salvation”.

Luke making using another *parallelismus membrorum*, with both verses referring to God's redemptive acts in and through the *κέρας σωτηρ*.

Perhaps Maluf's weakest argument lies in the case he makes for a past orientation in respect of the reference to the horn of salvation raised up from David's household. He bases his argument on the erroneous view that aorist-tense verbs are "generally employed for past narrative" (Maluf, 2009, 56). In fact, aorist verbs are usually understood to refer more generally to an action or state of affairs. They tend to say more about the nature of the action (that is, a single, undivided event) than about the past, present or future tense. As with the successive aorist verbs of the *Magnificat* in Luke 1:50–53, I suggest that here too, in 1:68–69, Luke is using a prophetic aorist to declare God's coming acts of deliverance in and through the person and work of Jesus, as present reality.

In fact, understood in this way, the implied intertexture of the reference to David's household in 1:69, and the prior reference in 1:27 to Joseph being a member of the house of David, prepares the way in the progressive texture for the need for Joseph and Mary to travel to Bethlehem, described as the *πόλιν Δαυίδ* (Luke 2:4). This, in turn, sets the scene for the birth of Jesus as *σωτήρ ὃς ἐστὶν χριστὸς κύριος* taking place in the *πόλει Δαυίδ*. All these occurrences of the Davidic *topos* suggest a messianic function in the rhetology of Luke's narrative. Furthermore, the occurrence of forms of words such as *ἁγία*, *διαθήκης*, and the phrase *ἀφέσει ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν*, point to the additional presence of priestly rhetorlect in the *Benedictus's* rhetorical blend, consistent with its dominant presence in the opening narrative unit of Luke 1, connecting these accounts to the cultural history of Israel and the temple.

It becomes clear from the juxtaposition of the two infancy narratives and in the progressive texture developed in the narratives, that Jesus is the one to whom the *Benedictus* points and to whom Zechariah subordinates his own son in 1:76. Zechariah prophesies that John will be called the prophet of the Most High, implying firstspace prophetic conceptualisation of a prophet's body serving God in the political kingdom of Israel, in the ancient prophetic tradition of Israel (1:70). Attached to this observation is a visualisation of God the King selecting John to be a prophet, whose role it will be to precede the Lord and to prepare the way for the Lord's ministry (1:76). In the space of blending this implies the expression of thirdspace conceptualisation of John as the dispenser of God's justice, for and on behalf of the *κύριος*, the mighty *σωτήρ*. These aspects indicate the dominant presence of prophetic rhetorlect in the text of the *Benedictus*.

The above observations serve as a comprehensive motivation for treating the reference to *κέρας σωτηρίας ἡμῖν ἐν οἴκῳ Δαυὶδ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ* in 1:69 as the implication of a reference to Jesus in the unfolding progressive texture and rhetology of the infancy narratives, perhaps with the promise of 2 Sam 7:12–13 in view for Luke.<sup>83</sup> I wholeheartedly concur with the observation of Nolland (1989, 84) that Zechariah’s doxology “presupposes the provision of the Davidic Messiah . . . and anticipates from the perspective of the infancy of John both John’s preliminary eschatological role and the eschatological visitation of God, presumably by the agency of the Davidic messiah.” Thus, rhetorically speaking, in a doxology intended to celebrate the birth of the great prophet who has come to prepare the way for the Lord, the ascription of honour has surprisingly shifted almost entirely away from John and is redirected towards Jesus.

### **3.7.3 Ideological texture: The *Benedictus* celebrates the promise of the royal son of David.**

#### **3.7.3.1 Ideological texture shows that John is worthy of honour.**

The *legitimation* of John by means of *narrativisation* is expressed in the repeated references to him in Luke 1 and 2, describing his family and his future role. The use of intertexture grounds these aspects of the narrative in the cherished past of Israel’s heritage (see §§ 3.3.3.1–3.3.3.5). Luke uses repetitive texture to emphasise foundational elements of the narrative of John’s annunciation and birth that occur again later in his gospel. Luke 7 contains a number of examples. In Luke 7:18–35, John’s disciples are sent to enquire from Jesus if he is the one for whom they have been waiting, since they have witnessed Jesus performing healings and acts of deliverance. In Luke 7:22, Jesus instructs the disciples to inform John of what they had witnessed, summarising his works with the following list: *τυφλοὶ ἀναβλέπουσιν, χωλοὶ περιπατοῦσιν, λεπροὶ καθαρίζονται καὶ κωφοὶ ἀκούουσιν, νεκροὶ ἐγείρονται, πτωχοὶ εὐαγγελίζονται*. After this encounter, Jesus addresses the crowds regarding John (7:27). He quotes directly from Mal 3:1 and echoes the words of Isa 40:3 as he explains

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<sup>83</sup> Other passages from the Jewish Scriptures echoed in the words of the *Benedictus* include: Pss 18:18, 106:10 and 2 Sam 22:18 echoed in 1:71; Gen 24:12 echoed in 1:72a; Pss 105:8 and 106:45 echoed in 1:72b; Gen 26:3 echoed in 1:73; Josh 24:14 and Isa 38:20 echoed in 1:74b–75a; Mal 3:1 and Isa 40:3 echoed in 1:76b; Ps 107:10 echoed in v. 79a; and Isa 59:8 echoed in 1:79b (Bloomquist, 2002b, 47).

that John's prophetic role is to be God's messenger preparing the way.<sup>84</sup> A remarkable statement in 1:28 reasserts the greatness of John in salvation history, stating that no one is greater than John.

### 3.7.3.2 Jesus is *legitimated* as the greater of the two.

Given then that the *Benedictus* begins to clarify that it is Jesus for whom John is preparing the way, and that the doxology manifests an unfolding transfer of ascribed honour from John to Jesus in the infancy narratives, it is my suggestion that Luke is using a strategy in the mode of *legitimation* to ascribe honour to John as a bona fide prophet. Luke appears to be *unifying/subsuming* John into the story of Jesus, a key ideological move on the part of the author.

In Luke 7:33–34 we encounter a specific comparison that again suggests the developing asymmetrical honour-power relationship between John and Jesus being set up in the infancy narratives. In these verses, the ascetic discipline ascribed to John (“eating no bread and drinking no wine” – 1:33) is contrasted directly with the more “real-world” behaviour of Jesus (“eating and drinking” – 1:34). The concluding statement (“Nevertheless, wisdom is vindicated by all her children” – 1:35) also implies the *legitimation* of Jesus' ministry. Luke uses this *legitimation* to clarify that Jesus, although more conventional than John in his style of ethical and moral discipline, is the greater of the two.

In addition to the mode of *legitimation* implied in respect of the account of Gabriel's annunciation of John (Luke 1:8–20), the rhetoric of the *Benedictus* also implies aspects of *dissimulation*.<sup>85</sup> On the one hand, Zechariah's doxological prophecy declares the greatness of John, ascribing honour to him as προφήτης ὑψίστου κληθήσῃ (Luke 1:76a). On the other hand, it utilises aspects of *dissimulation* in that Zechariah's words subtly obscure his simultaneous declaration of John's subordination to Jesus. John's role as this προφήτης ὑψίστου will be to “go before the Lord to prepare his ways” (1:76b). The declaration that John “will go before the Lord” amounts to a *metaphoric trope*, used as a *euphemism* for

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<sup>84</sup> Luke 7:27a is a fairly accurate recitation of Mal 3:1a in the LXX, which reads, ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἐξαποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου, καὶ ἐπιβλέψεται ὁδὸν πρὸ προσώπου μου. Luke 7:27b also closely echoes Isa 40:3 in the LXX: ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν Κυρίου. εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν. These related passages are from Second Isaiah.

<sup>85</sup> For a definition of *dissimulation*, see § 2.2.8.2, especially Figure 3.

John's subordination to Jesus.<sup>86</sup> Zechariah's prophetic doxology on the occasion of John's birth thus forms an important aspect of Luke's developing rhetology in the juxtaposing and interweaving of the two infancy narratives, creating ideological texture as it implies a comparison between John's and Jesus' ministries (evident again in Luke's later use of Q material in Luke 7) to clarify the subordinate role that Zechariah's son is to play in relation to Jesus. Luke appears to be describing this subordination in such a way as to disguise social relations between an implied leader and his implied followers. This emphasises the importance of John's role apropos Jesus, implying the intention of provoking a positive response on the part of his readers. In the following section, I conjecture a possible situation in the world of the real readers that could provide a motivation for this ideological strategy.

### **3.7.3.3 Possible context of rivalry between the disciples of John and Jesus**

In the previous section I suggest the possibility that Luke intends for this ideological strategy of *legitimation* to serve as an explanation for the necessity of John's subordination to Jesus. In this section I will further explore the possibility that this *legitimation* rhetoric envisages disciples of John and Jesus who are impacted in some way by a hypothetical conflict between the two discipleship groups.

Both the NT gospels of Mark and John portray the ministry of John in the upper Jordan wilderness as well established by the time Jesus begins his public ministry. In this regard, they differ from Matthew and Luke in that they do not include infancy narratives. Although it is impossible to know for certain, the narrative of Jesus being baptised by John (Luke 3:1–23a) suggests that John was engaged in public ministry for some time before the start of Jesus' public ministry. In the world of the real author, the text suggests that the discipleship movements of John and Jesus may have initially developed in parallel.

This possibility is strengthened by the reference to Jesus making and baptising more disciples than John (John 4:1–2; see also 3:25–30, earlier in his gospel). Hollenbach (1979), and Webb (2000) have both concluded that Jesus began his ministry as a disciple of John.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> For definitions of *euphemisation* and the use of *trope* (both strategies of the mode of *dissimulation*), see § 2.2.8.2, especially Figure 3.

<sup>87</sup> See also Murphy-O'Connor (1990, 363), who refers to Jesus as the "assistant" of John. Brown (1971, 87) concludes that, "there may not have been another and perhaps more primitive analogy

If this is the case, it suggests the possibility that Luke uses strategies of *legitimation* and *narrativisation* to justify the fact that, in spite of the earlier start to John's ministry, Jesus emerges in his gospel as the more highly honoured of the two.

If, as suggested in § 1.5, Luke is addressing a possible scenario of rivalry between disciples of John and of Jesus, Luke may be addressing a scenario in which the ministry and influence of John initially had the upper hand, and in which his followers had by that time established an influential presence in the region as a result of the earlier start of John's ministry.

These insights again point to the ascribed honour beginning to shift to Jesus. The progressive texture and rhetology of the narratives show that John begins his ministry as a highly honoured prophet whose role it is to prepare the way for the Jesus who is later declared to be the σωτήρ ὃς ἐστὶν χριστὸς κύριος (Luke 2:11). In the progressive texture of the infancy narratives, Jesus eventually surpasses John the great prophet in ascribed honour and power. Jesus is declared to be the χριστὸν κυρίου (Luke 2:26) and, by implication, uniquely honoured by God.

This hypothesised scenario would then provide the motivation for Luke's use of the strategy of *reification* to emphasise, by means of *eternalisation*, that John's subordinate role to Jesus is divinely ordained in order to fulfil the promises from Abraham to Malachi (Luke 1:70, 72, 73, 76), in the context of the realisation of God's eschatological purposes (Luke 1:68–69, 78–79).<sup>88</sup> The *Benedictus* hereby focusses the attention of readers on the subordination of John to Jesus, while ignoring possible aspects of the account that might have shown otherwise, such as the fact that initially greater honour is ascribed to John in the juxtaposed and interwoven narratives than to Jesus. This would also explain why Zechariah's doxology focuses more on John's subordination to Jesus than on celebrating answered prayer for a son, as one might have expected.

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used by the early Church to explain the relationship between John the Baptist (=Elijah) and Jesus, namely, that Jesus was to the Baptist as Elisha was to Elijah."

<sup>88</sup> For a definition of *reification*, and of *eternalisation* (one of the strategies of *reification*), see § 2.2.8.2, especially Figure 3.

Whatever the details, the text suggests the likelihood that Luke is using *narrativisation* to reconcile the disciples of John to the fact that Jesus, the royal σωτήρ, is ascribed greater honour than John in terms of his role in salvation history as God's royal χριστός.

#### 3.7.3.4 Issues around derivative power

The issue of who was subordinate to whom would have been of vital importance to the followers of John and Jesus at the time of Luke's writing because of their corresponding derivative social influence as disciples. Clarifying and establishing elements of derivative power gained from close association with Jesus as the royal σωτήρ and χριστός, as eventually becomes clear in the progressive texture, would have empowered the disciples of Jesus to teach with authority, make decisions, and provide effective leadership in the early Christian communities.<sup>89</sup> This power-by-association would then have been an early manifestation of what later came to be understood as apostolic succession.<sup>90</sup>

Luke also appears to have carefully chosen the grammatical construction of all the lines of Zechariah's doxology (1:68–79). The wording portrays God as the active subject of all these actions in and through the lives of both John and Jesus, implying the divine origin of both of their ministries. In terms of Thompson's modes of operation of power relations, this doxology appears to employ aspects of *reification* in the mode of *eternalisation* and *nominalisation/passivisation* as Zechariah makes these prophetic declarations regarding the birth of John and of Jesus.<sup>91</sup> The juxtaposed roles of John and Jesus are beginning to become clear in the *Benedictus*. Luke is using a variety of ideological strategies in the ideological

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<sup>89</sup> Matthew's Gospel possibly addresses an unrelated but in some ways similar dimension in his account of the Magi paying homage to the new born Jesus. See Trexler (1997), whose work on the journey of the Magi links the Magi to the notion of power in its depiction of great and powerful people honouring Jesus, thereby manifesting the underlying message of the greatness of this helpless infant in terms of his messianic role in salvation history.

<sup>90</sup> According to Justo González (2005, 15), the appeal to apostolic succession came to the fore later in the life of the early Jesus Movement in the refutation of gnostic teachers, and others claiming secret teachings from Jesus and social influence and power by way of claimed association with Jesus and his disciples, would have held a great deal of sway.

<sup>91</sup> For a definition of *nominalisation/passivisation* (mode of the strategy of *reification*), see § 2.2.8.2, especially Figure 3.

texture unfolding in the progressive texture to achieve his rhetorical goal of clarifying an asymmetrical honour-power relationship between John and Jesus.

### 3.7.3.5 Progressive texture manifests ideological texture.

Zechariah's declaration in 1:76 that John will go before the Lord, preparing his way, is redolent of Gabriel's promise to Zechariah in the chapter in 1:17, emphasising John's important role in preparing the way for Jesus. He will make known to God's people the knowledge of salvation which will be granted to them through the forgiveness of their sins.

Taken at face value, it could be argued that John is depicted in the *Benedictus* as preparing the way for the immediate arrival of God and not for a messianic figure. The presentation of John in the *Benedictus* has not been rhetorically shaped to assert John's inferiority to Jesus specifically, but, rather, Luke is allowing traditions about John that make no mention of Jesus to persist. It is only when the progressive texture of the narrative is taken into account that John's preparatory role in relation to Jesus becomes clearer. Luke uses the *Benedictus* to introduce the Davidic reference to God having raised up a mighty saviour in the house of his servant David. In the *Benedictus*, the concept of the *χριστός* is not yet specifically linked to Jesus, but is clearly implied by the use of the royal *topos* in 1:69 in the context of the progressive texture and rhetoric of the two infancy narratives thus far. Luke's rhetoric implies that his real readers, and even his implied readers, are expected to make this connection as a high-context society: John is the prophetic herald of Jesus, the *χριστός* of David.

Only in Luke 2 is the progressive texture developed to the extent that Jesus is finally referred to specifically as the *σωτήρ ὃς ἐστὶν χριστὸς κύριος*. For Luke's audience, this point would have reaffirmed their conviction in this regard, while at the same time clarifying the respective roles of John and Jesus. As Luke's narrative of the birth of Jesus unfolds in Luke 2, it becomes increasingly clear that John's role has been to prepare the way for Jesus, and the implications of his role as *προφήτης ὑψίστου κληθήσῃ* who will be *ἐτοιμάσαι ὁδὸς αὐτοῦ*.

Later in Luke's Gospel, in 3:1–5, John is reintroduced by way of an oral-scribal recitation from Isa 40:3–5 in which the specific LXX reference to John preparing the way for God is amended from *εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν* (LXX) to *εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ* (Luke 3:4), thereby eliminating the specific reference to God and leaving open the possibility of a different referent, that is, by implication of the context, Jesus himself. Luke's real readers are likely to have known this already. Luke's *narrativisation* of these events

implies his desire to reinforce Jesus' *legitimacy* as the one for whom John prepares the way and, by implication, as the more highly honoured of the two.

It becomes increasingly clear in the progressive texture of Luke's Gospel that John's role is to prepare the way for Jesus. As discussed in § 3.2.6.2 with respect to the Q material used by Luke later in his gospel, John's reference to the coming one in Luke 3:15–16, whose sandals he is not worthy to untie, followed immediately by the account of the baptism of Jesus, demonstrates this explicitly. Read retrospectively in the light of the progression of the narrative, Luke's readers, as members of the Christian community, would have understood the *Benedictus* to be celebrating John's subordinate role in relation to Jesus.

This realisation points to a reduction in the honour ascribed to John and a subtle increase in the honour ascribed to Jesus. As already mentioned in similar vein § 3.6.2.3 above, it is surprising, in fact, that a doxology of Zechariah in response to the birth of his son says so little about John himself, other than his role as prophet of the Most High called to prepare the ways of the *κύριος* (1:76).

### **3.8 INCLUSIO STATEMENT – JOHN GROWS INTO ADULTHOOD (LUKE 1:80).**

The closing texture of this narrative unit (Luke 1:80) takes the form of a summary statement which, as we will see, marks a close parallel with the words at the close of the narrative of the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:40). The verse summarises the period of John's life from infancy through to the launch of his public ministry. The impression created is that growth into maturity is a dominant feature of John's childhood. Soon after reaching adulthood, John moves out into the wilderness to undertake his public prophetic ministry, to fulfil his role in preparing the way for the manifestation of Jesus.

### **3.9 CONCLUSION**

The thick description facilitated by the SRI analysis of Luke's account of John's annunciation and birth reveals a masterful blend of key rhetorolects from early Christian discourse. Narrative units 1, 4 and 5 evidence a dominance of prophetic rhetorolect in their rhetorical blend, along with subordinate elements of apocalyptic, miracle and wisdom rhetorolects, presented against a backdrop of priestly rhetorolect. Into this textured narrative, Luke has woven together the strands of inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, sacred texture, and ideological texture. The ideological texture created in the juxtaposing and weaving together of these two infancy narratives is developed in the progressive texture. This will be further explored in the next chapter.

Luke accomplishes various rhetorical outcomes. The priestly rhetorlect in the opening verses strengthens the portrayal of Zechariah as a trustworthy cultic leader, playing an active role as mediator between God and God's people, between the divine world and the human world. Using intertexture, he roots the narrative of John's birth in the faith and cultural traditions of Israel. Rhetorically, this is used by Luke to ascribe honour to John as the one who prepares the way for Jesus. The predominance of prophetic rhetorlect, blended with wisdom, miracle and apocalyptic rhetorlects appears to be consistent with the way in which discourse is used in Q materials incorporated later in Luke's Gospel. These applications of Q traditions strengthen the trajectory of the subordination of John to Jesus that is being set in motion in the progressive texture of the John and Jesus infancy narratives.

Russell B. Sisson (2002, 71–73) has shown that apocalyptic *topoi* are in fact uncommon in Q, making it unlikely that the Q community was characterised by an apocalyptic worldview. However, the apocalyptic elements that *are* present seem to be shaped by a process involving the modification of wisdom discourse. In Q, the scattered elements of apocalyptic discourse function as sources of motivation for the prophetic mission of the Q community, providing resources that assisted them to challenge their opponents (Sisson, 2002, 73). Thus, not unlike Q, Gabriel's annunciation to Zechariah in the narrative of John's birth, and Zechariah's words in the *Benedictus*, manifest minor elements of apocalyptic rhetorlect. However, much like Q, the narrative of John's birth predominantly expresses prophetic rhetorlect, blending in apocalyptic, miracle and wisdom rhetorlects, and in the case of narrative unit 1, also priestly rhetorlect.

Furthermore, the social and cultural texture of the narrative of John's birth taps into the honour-shame social values of ancient Mediterranean culture, emphasising the importance in salvation history of John's annunciation and miraculous conception. John is ascribed exceptional honour and authority as prophetic forerunner to Jesus. These are important elements of Luke's juxtaposing of the two infancy narratives, helping Luke to demonstrate the honour and power being ascribed to John. What we see in the progressive texture is that in Mary's visit to Elizabeth, and in Zechariah's *Benedictus*, the honour ascribed to John begins to wane and, as I will seek to show in chapter 4 below, it begins to be directed towards Jesus.

This explains why John is not always overtly portrayed as subordinate to Jesus in the opening texture of the infancy narratives. The angel Gabriel announces John's birth to his father, who is honoured as a priest selected by divinely directed lot to perform cultic rituals

in the temple. On the other hand, as will be discussed in chapter 4, the angel announces Jesus' birth to his unwed mother, whose ancestry and economic status are unspecified, and not to his father. John's birth is announced in the temple, the centre of Israel's connection with God, while Jesus' birth is announced in the backwater village of Nazareth. Both of these aspects appear at first glance to argue against any suggestion that Luke prioritises Jesus over John. However, John's great importance is derived from his role as Jesus' forerunner. As King (2009, 71) puts it, observing Luke's use of contrasts to make his point in the infancy narratives,

Strikingly, though, it is Zechariah, not Mary, who seems the more important figure when Luke's hearers first meet them. Zechariah is given an ancestry, as is his wife, and a status ("a priest," 1:5), whereas Mary, as we have seen, is no more than "a virgin." Zechariah is doing his priestly job (1:8-9), and "the people" (a very important entity for Luke) are "praying outside at the hour of sacrifice" (1:10).

These aspects evidence elements of complexity in the text that are accounted for in the progressive texture of the infancy narratives, and which reoccur later in Luke's incorporation of Q material.

It is my contention, then, that based on the way in which the birth narrative of John is developed rhetorically, unit-by-unit, with the honour ascribed to John being decreased and essentially transferred to Jesus, that Luke is building his argument towards the recognition of Jesus as the σωτήρ ὃς ἐστὶν χριστὸς κύριος in Luke 2:11. Seen in this light, even the reference in Zechariah's *Benedictus*, a doxology ostensibly in celebration of the birth of his son, declares that a mighty saviour has been raised up in the house of God's servant David (Luke 1:69). This ought to be interpreted as a rhetorical step, preparing the way for Luke's later overt proclamation of the person, role and office of Jesus.

## Chapter 4

# Jesus the Royal Messiah is born

In this chapter I argue that various sociorhetorical textures are present in Luke's development of his storyline telling of the birth of Jesus, the son of Mary, as God's *χριστός*, the *υἱὸς θεοῦ* and *σωτήρ* of Israel. The development of my argument involves a careful analysis and interpretation of the rhetography and rhetology of the birth and infancy narrative of Jesus as emergent Christian discourse in Luke 1:5–2:40. This involves an investigation into the ways in which Luke ascribes honour and power to Jesus as God's *χριστός*. I seek to show that he employs a blend of rhetorolects to achieve this communication, expressed in a variety of rhetorical textures. As has begun to emerge through my analysis of Luke's narrative of the birth of John, the consideration of the rhetography and rhetology comes strongly into focus in the ways in which he has structured his narrative and developed the progressive texture in pursuit of his aims. Once again, an understanding of key aspects of the different sociorhetorical textures and rhetorolects is harnessed to facilitate a thick description of Luke's proclamation.

In this chapter, I analyse the following narrative units that describe the annunciation and birth of Jesus: unit 2 – the annunciation of Jesus (1:26–38); unit 3 – the doxology of Mary (1:39–56); unit 6 – the birth of Jesus (2:1–7); unit 7 – the doxology of the angels and the tribute of the shepherds (2:8–21); and unit 8 – Jesus presented at the temple (2:22–40). The consideration of cultural and oral-scribal intertexture comprises an important aspect of my analysis because of the way in which Luke has crafted his infancy narratives, using phrases, titles and images that have identifiable antecedents in the Jewish Scriptures. Some of these elements also manifest cultural intertexture with the literature of the Jewish Pseudepigrapha and Roman imperial ideology. I begin now with a discussion of the social location of the implied audience of the Jesus infancy narrative.

### **4.1 SOCIAL LOCATION AND RELIGIOUS ARGUMENTATION OF IMPLIED AUDIENCE**

I have argued in §1.3 that Luke-Acts is written from the perspective of a Jewish Christian author and is addressed to fellow-members of the Jesus movement. I proceed with the assumption that this is also specifically true for his birth and infancy narrative of Jesus. In chapter 3, my analysis has led me to conclude that the language of Luke's narrative of the birth of John employs conversionist social rhetoric, particularly in the account of the angel's annunciation and in Zechariah's *Benedictus*.

#### 4.1.1 Social argumentation in Luke's narrative of the infancy of Jesus

The direct and implied reference to Jesus as successor to David's throne (1:27, 32, 69; 2:4, 11) suggests that the birth of Jesus marks the birth of one who comes as an eschatological royal figure. In the birth and infancy narrative of Jesus, the exact nature of his mission is not provided in the same degree of clarity as that of John. Rather, Luke's understanding of the mission and ministry of Jesus is implied in the range of royal *topoi* applied to him: υἱὸς ὑψίστου, υἱὸς θεοῦ, σωτήρ, κύριος, and χριστός. The implication of these royal titles, along with the reversionistic sentiments of Mary's *Magnificat* and the emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in his birth and forthcoming ministry, imply that the birth of Jesus marks the dawning of a new age. In terms of Robbins's (1975, 147–150) adaptation of Wilson's typology of sects (see § 2.2.6), these elements suggest the dominant use of a revolutionist rhetoric in the birth and infancy narrative of Jesus (rhetoric that argues for the eschatological overturning of the current social order in the fulness of time). This, in turn, is consistent with the dominant social rhetoric employed in the rest of Luke's Gospel. Luke's narrative of the birth and infancy of Jesus also offers hope for the dawning of a new age, especially in Mary's *Magnificat*, where a revolutionist hope for the positive reversal of the social order is expressed. This rhetorical aspect in respect of the Jesus narrative may also point to the superiority of Jesus over John, whose birth narrative predominantly uses conversionist rhetoric.

Later in the Luke's Gospel, in the teachings of Jesus (especially in the sermon on the plain – Luke 6:17–49), people are called to live lives marked by faith, justice and humility as they anticipate the full realisation of the new age that has dawned in the birth of Jesus. The argumentation in the wider context of Luke's Gospel implies a clear emphasis on human moral responsibility. These elements suggest clear moral and ethical implications for living under the rule of Jesus as the χριστός, and point to the presence of conversionist rhetoric (Robbins, 1996a, 147). Furthermore, the narrative of Jesus' infancy also implies that people can “experience the extraordinary effects of the supernatural” power of Jesus as the σωτήρ ὃς ἐστὶν χριστὸς κύριος, that is, implying the additional use of thaumaturgical rhetoric (see Robbins, 1996a, 149). Thaumaturgical rhetoric argues for the possibility of people experiencing the miraculous effects of supernatural influence in their lives. It would seem, then, that Luke's narrative of the infancy of Jesus expresses social rhetoric that comprises a blend of revolutionist, conversionist and thaumaturgical religious rhetoric.

#### 4.1.2 Social location of characters in the narrative of the birth of Jesus

We first encounter Mary on the occasion of her angelic visitation, which takes place in the little-known town of Nazareth. This is in stark contrast with Zechariah's angelic visitation, which had taken place in the Jerusalem Temple. In the case of John's parents, their priestly ancestry is narrated in detail, but in the case of Jesus, the text is silent regarding the social and economic location of Mary's family of origin. In the world of the text, Mary is an unwed mother and, by implication, her baby will be illegitimate, and therefore, she has great shame. These observations suggest that John's parents are, in fact, ascribed greater honour than Mary. Paradoxically, perhaps, Mary is not without honour. The reader soon encounters Elizabeth being subordinated to Mary in the world of the text by way of Elizabeth's greeting to Mary, addressing her as *ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ κυρίου μου*. The stress on the lowly circumstances of Mary's angelophany and her unwed status is somewhat rhetorically tempered by the honour ascribed to her in the words of the angelic greeting: *χαῖρε, κεχαριτωμένη, ὁ κύριος μετὰ σοῦ*. She is graced by the presence of the Lord. Thus, although at the start of the narrative she is a person of low ascribed honour, as the narrative progresses, the degree of honour ascribed to her increases and, it would seem, that of Elizabeth decreases by relative degree.

In general terms, rural culture features prominently in Luke's narrative of the birth and infancy of Jesus. Mary visits Elizabeth who lives in a Judean town in the hill country (Luke 1:39); the angel Gabriel appears to Mary in "a town in Galilee called Nazareth" and Joseph and Mary travel to Bethlehem in Judea, now both known to have been rural villages at the time of Luke's writing (Luke 1:26; 2:4); the new born Jesus is laid in a *φάτνη* (Luke 2:7); and the angel of the Lord and the heavenly host appear to *ποιμένες . . . ἀγραιοῦντες* (Luke 2:8). This social location of the characters among relatively poor sectors of society rather than among the elite and socially powerful, forms an important ingredient in the implied rhetorology of Luke's narrative. It argues for the universal relevance of Jesus' coming as the *χριστὸς κύριος*, not only for the religious faithful and politically connected and influential members of society, but for all people from all levels of social status and economic power.

#### 4.2 JESUS HONOURED IN THE ANGELIC ANNUNCIATION TO MARY (LUKE 1:26-38)

In narrative unit 2, Luke recounts an angelic visit to Mary. He uses several different strategies to build the rhetography and rhetorology of the narrative. As in the case of John discussed in chapter 3, Luke has used rhetography and sensory-aesthetic texture to appeal to the imagination and senses of his readers and to present his vision of the meaning and

truth of the narrated events. Here in respect of the annunciation of Jesus, he does the same. Luke 1:26–27 constitutes the opening texture of this narrative unit, introducing the account of the angelic annunciation. The middle texture comprises 1:28–38a, describing Mary’s angelic encounter. The closing texture comprises 1:38b, describing the angel’s departure.

#### 4.2.1 Introduction to the annunciation account (Luke 1:26–27)

According to the opening texture in 1:26–27, in the sixth month (presumably of Elizabeth’s pregnancy), God sends the angel Gabriel to Nazareth in Galilee to address a virgin engaged to Joseph, a descendant of David (ἐξ οἴκου Δαυίδ – 1:27). This reference to Joseph’s ancestry hints at the royal *topoi* to be used repeatedly of Jesus in his infancy narrative. I will seek to show that Luke is developing the rhetology in the progressive texture of his narrative of the birth and infancy of Jesus as part of its ideological texture. Nolland (1989, 49) points to the parallel between Mary’s virginity and Elizabeth’s barrenness. Both situations are viewed as obstacles to the fulfilment of the angel’s promise of a son to each of them. Further parallels in the wording reinforce the juxtaposition of the two narratives:

<b>John’s annunciation (Luke 1:5, 11, 19)</b>	<b>Jesus’ annunciation (Luke 1:26–27)</b>
<b>Chronological setting</b> “In the days (ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις) of King Herod of Judea” (1:5)	<b>Chronological setting</b> “In the sixth month” (Ἐν δὲ τῷ μηνὶ τῷ ἕκτῳ – 1:26)
<b>Recipient of the visitation is introduced</b> “There was a priest named Zechariah” (ἱερεὺς τις ὀνόματι Ζαχαρίας – 1:5)	<b>Recipient of the visitation is introduced</b> “[the angel Gabriel was sent] to a virgin engaged to a man named Joseph . . . the virgin’s name was Mary.” (τὸ ὄνομα τῆς παρθένου Μαριάμ. – 1:27)
<b>Divine commissioning of the angel</b> “There appeared to him an angel of the Lord . . .” (ἄγγελος κυρίου – 1:11)	<b>Divine commissioning of the angel</b> “The angel . . . was sent by God” (ἀπεστάλη ὁ ἄγγελος . . . ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ – 1:26)
<b>Messenger of the Lord is introduced</b> “The angel replied, I am Gabriel” (ἐγὼ εἰμι Γαβριήλ – 1:19)	<b>Messenger of the Lord is introduced</b> “the angel Gabriel (Γαβριήλ) was sent by God” (1:26)

Figure 8: Comparison between Luke 1:5, 11, 19 and Luke 1:26–27

The scene of the activity described in the opening texture (1:26–27) has now shifted to Nazareth. In the *zone of purposeful action* (see § 2.2.4) on the part of God, the angel Gabriel is sent to address a virgin named Mary who is engaged to be married to Joseph (1:26–27). This use of sensory-aesthetic texture appeals to the imagination of readers and facilitates a vividly engaging storyline.

The description of Mary's encounter with the angel Gabriel, who serves as a heavenly intermediary, and her experience of some form of a vision and/or an audition, suggests the use of apocalyptic discourse. In line with Carey's suggestion of a constellation of eleven possible *topoi* that mark the presence of apocalyptic discourse in texts, the Jesus narrative also suggests the possibility of Luke using apocalyptic rhetorolect at this point, as is the case in respect of the angelic annunciation of John.<sup>92</sup>

#### **4.2.2 Gabriel announces the coming birth of Jesus (Luke 1:28–38a).**

##### **4.2.2.1 The annunciation narrative unit lacks meaningful rhetography.**

Whereas the account of the angel's annunciation to Zechariah in the temple uses rhetography to emphasise the events taking place in the temple, in the case of Jesus, Luke appears to have changed rhetorical tack. This time he provides almost no rhetographic description of the geophysical setting. All the reader is told is that (1) the angel appears to Mary who lives in the Galilean town of Nazareth; (2) that Elizabeth is in her sixth month of her pregnancy; and (3) that Mary is a *παρθένον* engaged to Joseph, *ἐξ οἴκου Δαυίδ* (1:27). That being said, however, rhetography is still prominent in aspects such as references to: *ἐν γαστρὶ, τὸν θρόνον Δαυίδ, τὸν οἶκον Ἰακώβ,* and *πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐπελεύσεται ἐπὶ σέ,* rhetorically adding to the vividness of the narrative.

The juxtaposing and weaving together of the John and Jesus infancy narratives poses the following question: If I am correct in my assertion that Luke is developing an asymmetrical power relationship between John and Jesus, how can the fact that the two annunciation stories appear initially to ascribe greater honour to John than to Jesus be accounted for? As referred to in § 4.1.2 above, John's annunciation to the priest Zechariah takes place in the temple at a time when Zechariah has the highly honoured responsibility of attending to the

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<sup>92</sup> See § 2.2.10.2 for my description of the relevant apocalyptic *topoi* suggested by Carey, and § 3.2.5.3 in respect of the evidence for apocalyptic discourse in the annunciation of John to Zechariah.

evening incense offering; on the other hand, the annunciation to Mary takes place in a little-known town to an unmarried woman of no consequence.

This apparent anomaly can possibly be explained as follows: In the John infancy narrative, Luke uses his rhetographic descriptions of the sacred temple space to emphasise the honour ascribed to John at the outset of John's infancy narrative. In doing so, he also highlights the close connection between his gospel and the faith traditions of ancient Israel. By means of priestly rhetorlect, employed in the introduction of the characters of Zechariah and Elizabeth with their priestly ancestry, and in the setting of the geophysical scene of the angelic encounter in the temple, the narrative is rooted in the priestly traditions of Israel. Against this backdrop, as the storyline develops, the narrative shifts to the predominant use of prophetic rhetorlect, along with the subordinate element of apocalyptic rhetorlects mentioned above, and the wisdom, and miracle rhetorlects discussed below. As the progressive texture develops, decreasing honour is ascribed to John while the honour assigned to Jesus increases, until the asymmetrical power relationship between John and Jesus is clarified. Luke thus diminishes the role and honour of priestly rhetorlect in the progressive texture, while raising the importance of prophetic rhetorlect.

#### **4.2.2.2 Repetitive texture establishes themes and structural parallels.**

The angel announces himself to Mary in 1:28, greeting her with the greeting, *χαῖρε*. Green (1997, 87) holds that by using this greeting, Luke is implying far more than a mere greeting, arguing that the angel's assurance of the Lord's presence in her life (*ὁ κύριος μετὰ σοῦ* – 1:28) designates Mary as "the object of divine benefaction" (Green, 1997, 87). This view is supported by Stock (1980, 466), according to whom,

Daß diese Formel nicht als Gruß zu verstehen ist, dürfte auch daraus hervorgehen, daß sie bei der definitiven Zuteilung und Bekräftigung des Auftrags wieder aufgenommen wird und daß mit ihr ausgesprochen wird . . . sie kann daher nicht als eine konventionelle Floskel betrachtet werden.

However, I would disagree with the interpretation of Stock. According to BDAG (1979, 874), the greeting *χαῖρε* is merely a formulaic greeting. Nonetheless, the assurance of the Lord's presence and favour on her life in 1:28, 30 expresses the notion of divine patronage, thus manifesting social and cultural texture. These observations are explored in greater detail in the sections that follow.

As a sign attesting to the reliability of his message, the angel tells Mary of the miraculous conception of her relative, Elizabeth. He begins with the words *καὶ ἰδοὺ*, manifesting repetitive texture with the parallel portion in 1:20, where the angel metes out punishment to Zechariah as a consequence for his disbelief. In 1:36 the angel's promise is fulfilled. Elizabeth has conceived as promised. Luke stresses the uniqueness of Elizabeth's conception by using the third person feminine pronoun *αὐτῆ* as the subject of *συνείληφεν*. He achieves added emphasis by using the feminine personal pronoun a total of three times in reference to Elizabeth in the same sentence (*αὐτῆ . . . αὐτῆς . . . αὐτῆ* – 1:36), again manifesting repetitive texture.

Once again, as in the juxtaposed birth narrative of John, Luke the omniscient implied author knows Mary's inner thoughts. He tells of her agitation at the nature of the angelic greeting. She is said to ponder on what was meant by the angel addressing her as *κεχαριτωμένη*, and his assurance of God's presence in her life (1:28–29). In a similar vein, but with a more positive connotation, in Luke 2:19 the author says that Mary values the memory of the words of affirmation spoken by the angel and shepherds regarding her son, and that she ponders them in her heart. Luke is here using a form of the word *συμβάλλω*, a verb functioning in the same semantic field as the form of *διαλογίζομαι*, used of Mary's ponderings in 1:29. This communication in the *zone of emotion-fused thought* suggests Luke's interest in the internal thought-worlds of his characters. As concluded in respect of the infancy narrative of John, Luke's rhetorical intention appears to be to stress and emphasise the need for readers to read carefully and to take note of hidden details such as progressive texture and implied argument in the development of the narrative.

The angel affirms that nothing is impossible with God (literally, “all things [*πᾶν ῥῆμα*] are not impossible [*οὐκ ἀδυνατήσκει*] with God” – 1:37). The implied reader is hereby assured that Elizabeth's conception is the outcome of divine action. Mary's further response to these assurances expresses her submissive attitude and willingness to embrace God's will in her life (*γένοιτό μοι κατὰ τὸ ῥῆμά σου* – 1:38). As the following comparison shows, repetitive texture creates a structural parallel between 1:13–17 (the annunciation of John) and 1:26–38 (the annunciation of Jesus).

- (1) The setting is established in connection with the appearance of an angel (1:11 // 1:26–28);
- (2) There is a fearful reaction on the part of the person involved (1:12 // 1:29);
- (3) The angel expresses consoling words (1:13a // 1:30);

- (4) A son is promised (1:13b // 1:31);
- (5) The angel declares that the promised son will be great (1:14–15 // 1:32);
- (6) The role of the promised son is explained (1:16–17 // 1:33);
- (7) Doubts are expressed (1:18 // 1:34); and
- (8) The angel responds to these doubts (1:19–20 // 1:35–37).

While this comparison emphasises the structural similarities, important differences also come to light:

- (1) In the case of Mary, as omniscient narrator, Luke identifies Gabriel by name at the beginning of the account (1:26), whereas in John's annunciation, Gabriel only introduces himself later in the encounter (1:19). This suggests that Gabriel's identity was initially withheld from Luke's readers because of the integral role the information plays in Zechariah's rebuke.
- (2) Gabriel announces John's birth to his father (and not his mother) (Luke 1:11–20) but announces Jesus's birth to his (unwed, and low-honour) mother (and not his father) (Luke 1:26–38).
- (3) Whereas here in the case of Mary's encounter, the event is set very generally in Nazareth (1:26), in the case of Zechariah Luke is very specific about the geographical location of the encounter in the sacred space of the temple, at the centre of Israel's religious life. As observed in chapter 3, this location plays an important role in terms of the rhetography of the annunciation to Zechariah (1:8–11). John's father is ascribed greater honour than Jesus's mother in the world of the text, at least in respect of the geographical location of the angel's annunciation to Mary (see § 4.2.2.1).
- (4) A subtle difference can also be identified between Luke's descriptions of the way in which the two recipients of angelic visitations respond. In the case of Zechariah, he is described as terrified and overwhelmed by fear (1:12). In the case of Mary, she is described as perplexed by the content of the angel's message (1:29), rather than by the supernatural encounter itself.

The implied rhetology of the passage also highlights the *topoi* of faith and doubt. These concepts are expressed in respect of Zechariah's doubt (1:18). They surface again conceptually in Mary's doubts (1:34) and later in her affirmation of faith (1:45). This repetition draws attention to the juxtaposed situation with Zechariah. The irony of the text is that, in response to Zechariah's doubts, the angel introduces himself and spells out his credentials (1:19). In response to Mary's doubts, the angel explains to her the inner

workings of the miracle: The Holy Spirit will “come upon” Mary and the “power of the Most High” will “overshadow” her (1:35a). The irony lies in the fact that in Mary’s case there are no negative consequence for her initial disbelief, unlike in Zechariah’s case. Instead, Mary’s doubt provides an opportunity for the angel to outline God’s royal purposes. In the world of the text, Mary’s doubt is apparently not as serious as that of Zechariah. Perhaps, the implication of the rhetology is that, as a serving priest, Zechariah would be expected to manifest greater confidence in the angel’s promises.

#### **4.2.2.3 Repetitive texture emphasises the role of the Holy Spirit.**

The repetitive texture reflected in the various references to the work and role of the Holy Spirit in the infancy narratives of John, as analysed in chapter 3 of my thesis, are again rhetorically important in the Jesus infancy narratives. According to Luke 1:35, the birth of the one who will be the *υἱὸς θεοῦ*, will be the result of Mary being overshadowed by the Most High. According to Marshall (1978, 70), the Holy Spirit is here “equated in poetic parallelism with the power of God”, thus emphasising that the Holy Spirit plays a pivotal role in the conception of Jesus in Luke’s infancy narrative. Whereas in 1:15, the promised role of the Spirit in John’s life is portrayed in terms of prophetic inspiration, in the annunciation of Jesus, the “creative and life-giving role of the Spirit” is in view (Nolland, 1989, 54).

As I now seek to demonstrate, the role of the Holy Spirit features prominently in the early chapters of Luke’s Gospel, beyond the infancy narratives themselves. The repetitive texture evinced in these references to the role of the Spirit connects the account of Jesus’ annunciation to similar references in other parts of the infancy narratives, and prepares the way for the emphasis on the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts as a whole. The following examples can be noted:

- In Luke 2, the Holy Spirit features in the affirmation of the messiahship in the temple. The Holy Spirit rests on Simeon, a righteous and devout man. He speaks prophetically over the life of Jesus. The Holy Spirit has prepared Simeon for this day (2:26) and has guided him to be present to receive the dedicated infant Jesus (2:27).
- In Luke 3:21–22, the Spirit plays an active role in the baptism of Jesus.
- In Luke 4:1, Jesus is filled with the Spirit and is led by the Spirit into the wilderness where he faces a series of temptations.

- The Holy Spirit features prominently throughout the rest of Luke-Acts.<sup>93</sup>

In narrative unit 2, the angel takes the promise further, asserting that Jesus will be ἅγιον and will be called υἱὸς θεοῦ (1:35b). In the view of Marshall (1978, 71) the text suggests that the emphasis on the holiness of Jesus may be related to the role of the Holy Spirit in his conception. He holds that “the child will be holy as the bearer of the Spirit”, but he highlights that the main point of the angel’s description is that Jesus will be the υἱὸς θεοῦ, “in its true sense as one begotten by God” (Marshall 1978, 71). The background to the angel’s statement about the role of the Spirit in Mary’s conception (πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐπελεύσεται ἐπὶ σὲ καὶ δύναμις ὑψίστου ἐπισκιάσει σοι – 1:35) could possibly manifest oral-scribal intertexture with Isa 32:15a in the LXX (ἕως ἂν ἐπέλθῃ ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς πνεῦμα ἀφ’ ὑψηλοῦ). I do not think Marshall is correct in his view that Jesus is proclaimed as υἱὸς θεοῦ, “in its true sense as one begotten by God” (Marshall 1978, 71). Marshall appears to be reading later Christian dogma retrospectively into the text. Although the Holy Spirit is the agent in the process of conception in Luke’s narrative, a consideration of the Isaiah intertext suggests that it is improbable that the word ἐπελεύσεται in 1:35 “is used as a euphemism for sexual intercourse”, as suggested by Marshall (1978, 70). It is more likely that, at the time of writing, Luke was speaking metaphorically of the actions of the Holy Spirit. In my earlier SRI analysis of the birth narrative of John, I concluded that the prominent place given to the role of the Holy Spirit manifests prophetic rhetorolect (see § 3.2.3.3). The prominence given to the Holy Spirit in the birth of Jesus again suggests the presence of prophetic rhetorolect. This is probably also the case in respect of the narrative of Jesus’ infancy.

#### 4.2.2.4 Repeated application of royal *topoi*

The royal *topos* introduced in the brief genealogy in 1:27, referring to Joseph as a descendant of David in the opening texture, is now more fully developed in 1:32, 33, 35b. According to 1:32, 33, 35b, the angel promises Mary that her son will be μέγας.<sup>94</sup> He will be called υἱὸς ὑψίστου and God will give to him the θρόνον Δαυὶδ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ. Furthermore, her son will βασιλεύσει over the house of Jacob for ever and there will be no end to his βασιλείας. In fact, he will be called υἱὸς θεοῦ. These royal *topoi* manifest again in 1:69 where

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<sup>93</sup> See examples of numerous references to the person and work of the Holy Spirit in Luke 10:21; 11:13; 12:10,12; Acts 1:2, 5, 8, 16; 2:4, 17, 18, 33, 38.

<sup>94</sup> See the parallel description of John in Luke 1:15.

Zechariah declares, probably with reference to Jesus in the *Benedictus*, that God has raised up a *κέρας σωτηρίας* in the *οἶκῳ Δαυὶδ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ*; in 2:4, where Luke emphasises that Joseph is a descendant of David; and in 2:11 where Luke emphasises that Bethlehem is the *πόλις Δαυίδ*. The reason given for the trip to Bethlehem (2:1–5) is that, as a descendant from the *οἴκου καὶ πατριᾶς Δαυίδ*, Joseph is required to register for the Emperor’s census in Bethlehem. In 2:11, the progressive texture on the theme of honour ascribed to Jesus escalates with the angel’s declaration to shepherds in a field that on that very day, a *σωτήρ* has been born *ἐν πόλει Δαυίδ*, one who is *χριστὸς κύριος*. These repeated royal *topoi* create repetitive texture that emphasise the royal descent, nature and function of Jesus.

The use of *υἱὸς θεοῦ* in 1:35b reaffirms the royal nature of Mary’s promised son, who has already been referred to as the *υἱὸς ὑψίστου*, the one who will be given the throne of his ancestor David (1:32). Marshall (1978, 68) observes that in the words of 1:32 “the Lord God will give to [Jesus] the throne of his ancestor David”, Luke is developing the status of Mary’s son “in terms of accession to the throne of David his father”. The fact that this reference manifests repetitive texture with other parts of Luke 1 and 2 supports Marshall’s observation in this regard. Luke repeatedly emphasises Jesus’ descent from David. Conceptually, this repeats a point made in the opening texture in 1:26–27, where Mary is described as “engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David” (Luke 1:27).

In the progressive texture of his narrative, Luke’s implied rhetology is being developed to declare Jesus’ royal descent. The angel makes startling declarations concerning the royalty of Jesus that are never applied to John. Marshall (1978, 67) maintains that the title *υἱὸς ὑψίστου* in 1:32 “is more than a name; it indicates the true being of the person so called.” Conceptually, the title is equivalent to the more common *υἱὸς θεοῦ* of 1:35. Although the angel is not yet using the title *ὁ χριστός*, the royal titles applied to Jesus by the angel reinforce Luke’s unfolding rhetology in the progressive texture, as he builds his narrational case for the messianic role and nature of Jesus. Gabriel concludes the promise by assuring Mary that her future son will rule over the house of Jacob for ever. As I seek to demonstrate in this chapter, 1:32–35 blends together various textures and rhetorolects. The titles *υἱὸς θεοῦ* and *υἱὸς ὑψίστου* also anchor the account within the broader narrative of Luke-Acts:

- In 1:69, Zechariah’s doxology celebrates Jesus’ promised birth as a *κέρας σωτηρίας* raised up in the house of David.
- In 3:38 we come across the term *υἱὸς θεοῦ* at the head of the genealogical lineage of Jesus: “the son of Adam, the son of God”, rather than the title being applied to Jesus.

Jesus is shown to descend from Adam, who was the υἱὸς θεοῦ in the sense of being the first (divinely) created human being.

- In 22:70, during Jesus' sham trial before the council of elders and chief priests, Jesus is asked if he is the Son of God. Jesus simply replies, "You say that I am," thus neither owning the title nor blatantly rejecting it.<sup>95</sup>

An analysis of the repetitive texture connecting Luke's use of these royal *topoi* in 1:32–35 to usage in the rest of the narrative of Luke's Gospel shows that Jesus never refers to himself as υἱὸς θεοῦ. The application of the title to Jesus by the angel Gabriel in 1:32–35 ascribes honour to Mary's promised child. Luke's rhetorical intention in this regard will eventually unfold in the progressive texture as ideological texture begins to emerge.

#### **4.2.3 These royal *topoi* manifest cultural intertexture with Graeco-Roman culture.**

These royal *topoi* (υἱὸς ὑψίστου, θρόνον Δαυίδ, βασιλεύσει, βασιλεία, υἱὸς θεοῦ) manifest significant and close cultural intertexture with Roman imperial ideology expressed by way of inscriptions, coins, architectural representations, and the performance of the ruler cult.<sup>96</sup> Similar cultural intertexture with Roman imperial ideology repeatedly comes to the fore in the development of the progressive texture of the infancy narratives.<sup>97</sup> Because of the potential implications of this intertexture for the ideological texture of the infancy narratives, it will be considered in some detail at this point.

##### **4.2.3.1 Some suggest the presence of hidden transcripts of resistance.**

In this respect, some interpreters hold that Luke's text suggests the presence of *hidden transcripts of resistance*, as described in the studies on domination and resistance undertaken by James Scott (1990). Scott's work provides useful sociological language for the description of hidden expressions of resistance on the part of people who belong to groups dominated by powerful oppressive ruling classes. The findings of his analysis of symbolic gestures of domination and resistance brought him to the insight that there are

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<sup>95</sup> See also, for example, Luke 3:22; 8:28; 9:35 and Acts 13:33.

<sup>96</sup> See the studies on the imperial cult and its implications for NT interpretation undertaken by Ethelbert Stauffer (1948); Dominique Cuss (1974, esp. 36–39, 71–74); and DeSilva (1991).

<sup>97</sup> See especially the *Magnificat* (1:46–55), Zechariah's *Benedictus* (1:68–79), the birth of Jesus (2:1–7), the shepherd's angelophany (2:8–21), and the dedication of Jesus at the temple (2:22–40).

“broad patterns” that manifest universally in situations of domination and resistance. One such widely observed pattern is his differentiation between public transcripts that involve, “the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate” (Scott 1990, 2), and hidden transcripts that involve “discourse that takes place ‘offstage,’ beyond direct observation by powerholders” (Scott 1990, 4).

Horsley (2004) has undertaken an application of Scott’s conceptualisation of hidden transcripts and the arts of resistance in the interpretation of the NT. He argues that earlier NT writings in Mark’s Gospel and the hypothetical document Q provide evidences of hidden transcripts that arose from and addressed communities of Jesus-followers who were opposed to and opposed by their rulers. In his view, the later literate leadership and resultant writings of early Christianity found, for example, in Luke-Acts “still address communities of subordinate people, although they have clearly acquiesced in various ways to the dominant order” (Horsley 2004, 14). Horsley (2006, 25) argues that Luke’s application of royal *topoi* in his infancy narratives, which ascribe honour to Jesus “[flies] directly in the face of . . . ‘imperial ideals’” in that, in various ways, the emperors Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius, Nero, Vespasian, Titus, Domitian the son of Vespasian and brother of Titus, all claimed these titles for themselves (see the discussion in Deissmann, 2004 [1927], 364–365).

#### **4.2.3.2 Historical intertexture with Roman occupation**

Horsley (2006, 25) supports this argument by way of reference to Josephus’ accounts of atrocities suffered by the Jews at the hands of the Hellenists and then the Romans in preceding centuries. By the time the Jews finally surrendered to the *pax Romana* after the first Jewish war with Rome, they had been conquered multiple times by the Romans. Josephus provides a graphic description of the full-scale slaughter of the citizens of Jerusalem during the initial invasion under Pompey in around 63 B.C.E. According to Josephus (*AJ* 14.69–71), twelve thousand Jews perished at the hands of the Romans and their fellow Jews were “not able to bear the miseries they were under.”

In the subsequent decades, the Jews suffered repeated cruel attacks from the Roman forces as the Jews attempted to resist subjugation. Josephus describes how, a few years after Pompey, Cassius captured the Galilean town of Tarichea and carried off thirty thousand Jews into slavery (*B.J.* 1.180). Following a series of widespread Jewish rebellions, at around the time of the birth of Jesus circa 4 B.C.E., during the reign of Herod the Great, the Romans conquered Judea for the second time. Josephus describes a number of unsuccessful populist

messianic uprisings at the time led by rebels declaring themselves to be King: “Judas, the son of that Ezekias who had been head of the robbers” (*A.J.* 17.271–272); Simon the slave of king Herod (*A.J.* 17.273–277); and Athronges, described as “a tall man, [who] excelled others in the strength of his hands, he was so bold as to set up himself for king.” (*A.J.* 17:278–281). As Horsley (2006, 31) points out, in a number of instances the “slaughter and enslavement that ensued is noteworthy because it occurred in places in which Jesus and his followers lived or were active, according to gospel traditions.” Josephus describes a number of these situations (see esp. *B.J.* 1. 49; 2.68, 71). In *BJ* 1.149, Josephus speaks of about two thousand Jews being crucified in around 4 B.C.E. by Roman troops under Varus, who had regained control of Jerusalem. These scenes described by Josephus form the historical backdrop to Jesus’ life and ministry.

Shortly before Luke wrote his gospel, according to Josephus, in the Jewish War of 66–73 C.E. the Roman forces retaliated viciously after having been driven out of Judea by the Jews in their successful efforts to regain control of the region. In the town of Japha, in the vicinity of Nazareth, Galileans attacked the Roman forces and, after a six-hour-long battle, were eventually defeated. In retaliation, the Romans cut the throats of a multitude of Jews of all ages. The surviving women and infants were carried off into slavery after around fifteen thousand were slain. These events were very close to the time of writing of Luke’s infancy narratives. Horsley believes that the elements that he identifies as expressions of rhetorical critique of the Roman emperor implied in the Jesus birth narrative, were written in reaction to this suffering.

In terms of the influence that the horrific suffering described by Josephus may have had on the shape of Luke’s rhetoric, it is admittedly noteworthy that Jewish bodies suffered at the hands of the military forces of the occupying Roman power. As we have seen, the events took place in the geophysical territory of Judea and Galilee, the setting for the life and ministry of Jesus a mere few decades later. The “Social, Cultural, & Physical Realia” (Robbins, 2009, 109) of life in Judea and Israel implied by Luke can possibly be regarded as the firstspace social and political reality that gave shape to his prophetic conceptualisation. In his addressing of Jesus as σωτήρ, χριστός and κύριος, Luke could then be understood to be appealing to secondspace visualisation of God’s world as a kingdom under God, the true king, and of Jesus as God’s prophet-messiah, born now to usher in a new era under God’s rule. In the implied thirdspace of conceptual blending, Jesus is being envisaged by Luke as the one who has come as dispenser of God’s justice, restoring the honour to the subjects of his kingdom, beginning with Israel and including all those who subject themselves to the rule of Jesus as the royal χριστός.

#### 4.2.3.3 Evaluation of the “subversive” approach

Seen in a more negative light, in the world of the real readers, it has to be conceded that it is quite possible that aspects of Luke’s discourse presented a critical challenge to the claims of Roman hegemony. For example, later in Luke’s infancy narrative in Zechariah’s *Benedictus*, Jesus is repeatedly declared to be the σωτήρ (Luke 1:69–74). This observation can again be interpreted as a subversive strand in Luke’s narrative, a strand that perhaps manifests to a greater degree later on in Mary’s *Magnificat* where a clear association is made between the birth of Jesus and the downfall of the proud abusers of political and economic power.

It is possibly correct to conclude that implied Christian-disciple readers would have understood the narrative to be claiming universal Lordship for Jesus as the χριστός. By implication, Luke does not actually believe Roman rule to be absolute. In that case, the implication of *universalisation* of the power and authority of Jesus,<sup>98</sup> would perhaps have communicated an offensive challenge to those in power in the world of the real author. In this sense, there is already evidence in Luke’s infancy narratives of potential areas of conflict that, in later centuries of the early Church’s history, became more of a reality in the lives of persecuted Christians under Rome.

However, as has been observed in the analysis of the social location of the author and characters of Luke’s infancy narratives, these elements of potential challenge tend to be toned down in Luke’s writing, generally manifesting an attitude of cooperative respect for Roman rule (see §§ 4.2.3; 4.4.2). The range of dominant political-military-legal systems reflected in the Luke’s infancy narratives draws attention to what appears to be a somewhat paradoxical attitude towards empire. In spite of the implied elements of critique outlined above, Luke’s narrative also appears to endorse Roman power.<sup>99</sup> The social and political power of Rome appears to be portrayed as absolute. For example, later in the progressive texture of the narratives, the reader encounters Joseph and Mary, complying

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<sup>98</sup> For a definition of *universalisation* (a strategy in the mode of *Legitimation*), see § 2.2.8.2, especially Figure 3.

<sup>99</sup> Luke’s narrative also appears to reflect aspects of ideological texture in the historical intertexture between the world of the text and the world of the author, a world that had to deal with a rather ambiguous relationship between Early Christianity and the Roman state. Rome was always attempting to ferret out potential competitors with the purpose of eliminating them. Early Christianity at times looked somewhat threatening to the Roman occupiers but, at other times, it was regarded as fairly harmless. See the balanced discussion of the Palestinian political climate at the time of Jesus by Ben Witherington (1997, 152–156).

with the Emperor Augustus' decree by travelling to Bethlehem for the census, with no obvious objection. They appear to be portrayed as loyal subjects of the Roman Empire.

It would seem, then, that, rather than placing the birth of the *χριστός* in a consistently adversarial relationship to Rome, the overall focus of Luke's birth and infancy narratives appears to be the prophetic promise and hope for a royal redeemer figure and his role for Israel. The dominant message is one that affirms the Roman Empire. What then of the political implications for Rome of the range of royal *topoi* being used of Jesus, all of which would have implied a threat to reverse Roman power in the inferred claim to divinity for Jesus? As also mentioned in my discussion of rhetorolects below, the realisation of the implied challenge of the claims for the royalty of Jesus as the *χριστός* seems to have become clearer for Christians, and for Rome, by the time of the writing of the Book of Revelation, and in post-biblical times (see Green, 1997, 135). At the time of Luke's writing they seem still to be subordinated to a desire to portray the message of Jesus in a favourable light in the context of Roman rule.<sup>100</sup>

If these elements of implied subversive transcripts of resistance are present at all, they express what could be considered a *reification* of Roman rule (by assuming its existence in the background throughout the infancy narratives), and *fragmentation* of it (by showing ways in which Jesus comes as the one replacing it or improving on it, often by means of strategies of *expurgation*).<sup>101</sup> Luke appears to be engaging in ideological discourse that argues that the relation between Jesus and God is one of asymmetrical power, implying that the Roman rulers are not nearly as powerful as are Jesus and God and, by implication, Jesus' followers. I, therefore, conclude that, while Horsley and Scott's approach suggests some important aspects of historical context and elements of political challenge implied by the application of the royal *topoi* to Jesus, the approach does not adequately account for the

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<sup>100</sup> In this context it is interesting to note that the term *κύριος*, for example, had generally been used in the Graeco-Roman world to refer to one's benefactor or patron. This had led to its specific use in respect of Emperor Augustus. The KMB (1197.1.15) provides an example from an ancient Egyptian Greek text circa 12 C.E. that refers to the Emperor Augustus in divine terms: *θεός και κύριος καίσαρ αυτοκράτορ*, as does a reference from the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (8.1143) that speaks of *σπονδὰς ὑπὲρ τοῦ θεοῦ και κυρίου Αυτοκράτορος*.

<sup>101</sup> For a definition of the mode of *fragmentation*, and *expurgation* (a strategy in the mode of *fragmentation*) see § 2.2.8.2, especially Figure 3.

complexity of the infancy narratives and the apparent enigma in the implied cooperation with Rome, versus the implied critique of Rome.

#### **4.2.3.4 Alternative views on the intertexture with the Graeco-Roman world**

Ezeani (2010, 3–18) has provided a comprehensive assessment of the range of alternative views on Luke’s attitude towards Rome. He begins by referencing the apologetic position proposed by Sterling, that is, that Luke “undertakes a friendly portrayal of the Roman power apparatus, in order to show [his readers] that the new faith is far from being a danger to the [*sic*] Roman politics” (Ezeani, 2010, 2). He also draws attention to the strengths and weaknesses of views that are critical of the apologetic position (Ezeani, 2010, 2). He addresses, amongst others, the views of Cassidy (1978, 50–62) and Yoder (1994, 134–161), who argue, rather, that Luke portrays a defiant Jesus who poses a threat to the social and political structures of the time. Some interpreters, however, disagree with Cassidy and Yoder. Walaskay (2005, 15–37), for example, argues that, rather than attempting to show the Roman authorities that the new Christian faith harboured no threat to the Roman Empire, Luke was attempting to show his Christian readers that the early Christian movement and the Roman Empire did not need to fear each other. In the view of Walaskay, one of the ways Luke achieved this, later in Luke’s narrative, was by reflecting a willing cooperation with the authoritative decree of the Emperor on the part of his characters, rather than portraying any form of reactionary response.

Although Horsley is correct in his assertion that it could be argued that hidden transcripts of resistance to imperial rule are implied in the cultural intertexture expressed in the application of these royal *topoi* to Jesus, such a “search for coded evidence” tends to treat the concept of Roman Empire as a generalised symbol of oppressive political power, and it amounts to a gross oversimplification (Galinsky, 2011). Galinsky (2011, 6) holds that elements of resistance evident in the writings of the early church “cannot be isolated as resistance to Rome or the imperial cult alone”. In Galinsky’s (2011, 6, 142–146) view, this type of resistance is better understood as resistance to a wider “nexus of phenomena”, elsewhere in the NT referred to as “idolatry”. Allen Brent (1997) is perhaps more convincing than those who argue for the presence of hidden transcripts of resistance. In his view, these royal *topoi* point rather to a strategy of reconfiguration in respect of the dominant cultural and political values of Graeco-Roman world (Brent, 1997). He suggests that, by honing in on what amounted to a major focus of the imperial cult, namely, the maintenance of the *pax deorum* as the “sacramental means for the continuance of the

*saeculum aureum*" (Brent, 1997, 438), Luke is offering a positive rationale for abstention from identification with the bloodier aspects of the imperial cult, such as offering sacrifices, usually an ox, to the living genius of the reigning emperor, or to the genius of a past emperor (see Taylor, 1920). This purpose is far better achieved

through the *εἰρήνη* of Bethlehem, the triumphal entry, and the *νικὴ* and *σωτηρία* that follow from the birth of the child from the virgin, and from his death and resurrection. Theophilus can thus know 'the security (*τὴν ἀσφάλειαν*) regarding the discourses of his catechesis (*περὶ ὧν κατηχήθης λόγων*)' (Brent, 1997, 438).

Brent argues convincingly that Luke's portrayal of the birth of Jesus in royal terms, that is, as the *σωτὴρ* bringing peace to the world, comprises a purposeful framing of these events as the eschatological fulfilment of Jewish hopes. According to Brent (1997, 413–414),

Luke's solution was to encourage them to see Christianity as the fulfilment of Judaism which paralleled Augustus' fulfilment of that to which the religious practices of Republican magistrates had aspired, namely the divine *pax* in both nature and society. The Order of the Christian community, constituted by the apostolate whose *κοινωνία* continued the teaching and healing ministry of Jesus along with the breaking of bread (Acts 2:42), was the true means of producing the *pax dei*, in contrast to Augustus' *pax deorum* (the *ἐπὶ γῆς/ἐν οὐρανῷ εἰρήνη*). (Luke 2:[1]4; 19:38)

Brent (1997, 432) argues that Luke's message of the royal birth of Jesus and its implications of *νικὴ* and *σωτηρία* was more likely to be readily embraced by Theophilus and his community. In his view, Luke's rhetoric intended to show that the message of Jesus did not pose a threat to the high regard in which the Mediterranean world held the *pax Romana*, embraced and promoted as it was by the imperial cult. Participation in the early Jesus movement opened up the prospect of continued integration into Roman society because the coming of Jesus would "achieve the perceived objectives of these societies" (Brent, 1997, 438). At the time of Luke's writing, imperial worship was not legally enforced (that would come later, during the second century C.E.). The positive social results of the emperor's rule, manifest in the established social order and political peace as positive outcomes, did not need to be denounced and opposed as a consequence of embracing Jesus.

Brent's view in this regard is supported by the earlier study of Cuss (1974, esp. 36–39, 71–74), who had sought to show that the NT gospels, and also the writings of Paul, reflect a largely positive attitude towards Roman imperialism. These NT authors appeared to recognise the State as legitimate "insofar as it remained within its legitimate limits" (Cuss, 1974, 36). In Brent's view, Jesus is portrayed in Luke's infancy narratives as the fulfilment

of the same Jewish eschatological hopes that were expressed in the *pax deorum* and the *saeculum aureum* of the Roman Empire.

Brent's conclusions are also consistent with those of Gregory E. Sterling (1992), who has argued that the literature of Luke-Acts should be classified as apologetic historiography. He defines apologetic historiography as:

the story of a subgroup of people in an extended prose narrative written by a member of the group who follows the group's own traditions but Hellenizes them in an effort to establish the identity of the group within the setting of the larger world. (Sterling, 1992, 17)

According to Sterling (1992, 17), authors of apologetic historiography saw their communities as subgroups of wider society: The writing of their narratives was motivated by a desire to "provide them with a definition of who they were – a definition which must have struck them as new and difficult if they heard what was being said." In terms of the views of Brent and Sterling, then, Luke's declaration of Jesus being born as υἱὸς ὑψίστου, υἱὸς θεοῦ, that he occupies the θρόνον Δαυίδ, and his use of words such as βασιλεύσει and βασιλεία, appear to be intended to reframe Jewish Christian convictions around the gospel in general and, more specifically, around the birth of Jesus. He does so in such a way that his implied Gentile Christian readers will be empowered to embrace the message of the gospel as a faith expression and world view consistent with the values of the Roman Emperor's *pax Romana*. Sterling shows that the author is at pains to narrate the birth of Jesus in such a way as to show that embracing Jesus and the gospel will be consistent with the cultural values and priorities of the best of Hellenistic culture under Roman rule. The *pax* proclaimed and embraced in the Christian gospel of Jesus was conceptual and spiritual and, in that sense, subversive rather than overtly political and would thus at this early stage in the Christian Era did not as yet constitute a threat to Rome, but may well have made it easier for Gentiles to embrace the gospel.

Brent argues that it is Luke's intention to show that the process of embracing Jesus does not necessitate the denunciation of the positive outcomes of Roman imperial reign. Sterling categorises the resulting genre as apologetic historiography. My own analysis in this chapter and the previous one finds that Luke's infancy narratives of John and Jesus predominantly employ prophetic rhetorlect (with only fewer evidences of apocalyptic, priestly and miracle discourse included in the blend). This results in the focus being more on the nation of Israel than a universal focus and reduces the level of perceived direct

attack on the Roman Emperor.<sup>102</sup> In spite of this, Sterling (1992, 346) still regards Luke's infancy narratives as "the most Semitic section" of Luke's Gospel. This is confirmed by my own SRI analysis highlights which finds that the infancy narratives of John and Jesus abound in cultural intertexture with the literature of early Judaism and echo aspects of the Jewish Scriptures. I have to conclude that the rhetoric of Luke's birth narrative argues convincingly against the idea of hidden transcripts of resistance being at play in Luke's birth and infancy narratives.

#### **4.2.3.5 Some concluding thoughts on the matter**

This aspect of Luke's narrative functions as part of the progressive texture and overall rhetology of Luke's infancy narratives. Luke is implying an argument that is growing in clarity in his narratives, that is, that Jesus is God's royal σωτήρ for Israel (see 1:32, 35, 69, 76). In the world of the text, this emphasis also manifests social and cultural texture in that Luke's rhetorical strategy ascribes honour to Jesus, the Davidic σωτήρ, as one who is worthy of being addressed in such royal terms. As for Horsley's interpretation, even though he may correctly point to the fact that Luke's rhetoric implies a dimension of challenge to the Roman Empire in its proclamation of Jesus as King, Luke's second and thirdspace vision is still predominantly prophetic, that is, national and earth-bound rather than focussed on eternal resurrection-life under God the Almighty in a new heavenly realm.

#### **4.2.4 A blend of prophetic and wisdom rhetorolects proclaims the promise.**

Luke's real readers are likely to have understood their relation to God in terms of God's patronage, as evidenced in Deut 32:6; 2 Sam 7:14; 2 Kgs 2:12; 5:13; 6:21; 13:14 and Isa 22:21 (see Pilch and Malina, 2016, 131). In the social and cultural texture of Luke's narrative, the patronage system undergirds the angel's declaration to Mary that she has found favour with God (1:30). It explains what is meant by the angel's declaration of God's care and favour. The patronage system was understood to be fundamental to human family life, modelled on the understanding of a human father caring for his children as patron.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> This reading of the royal *topoi* reiterates Robbins's finding that the social location of the rhetoric of Luke's writing is generally respectful towards Roman officials (§ 1.3), and this is consistent with the observation that later in Luke's Gospel, at the time of Jesus's trial. Pilate finds "no basis for an accusation against this man" (Luke 23:4).

<sup>103</sup> See the overview article by DeSilva (1999, especially p. 30).

#### 4.2.4.1 Royal *topoi* and rhetorolects

Although the royal *topoi* discussed in the previous paragraphs provide the main framework for making sense of the angel's application of the *υἱὸς ὑψίστου* (1:32) and *υἱὸς θεοῦ* (1:35) titles to Jesus, it would be wrong to ignore the fact that the cultural intertexture also implies the use of metaphor, expressed in the subtle deployment of wisdom rhetorolect. According to Robbins (2009, xxix–xxx, 109), the household, with its real-life experience of family life and parenting, provides the impetus for firstspace conceptualisation of wisdom rhetorolect. Gabriel's declaration that Mary's son is to be called *υἱὸς ὑψίστου* and *υἱὸς θεοῦ* implies this experiential background, while manifesting the secondspace conceptualisation of God as Father-Creator and of Jesus as God's metaphorical son. The metaphor is extended in 1:35 in Gabriel's promise that the Holy Spirit will "come upon" Mary and that she will be overshadowed by "the power of the Most High".

The royal *topoi* are prominent in 1:32–33 in Gabriel's promise that Jesus will be *μέγας*, and that the *κύριος ὁ θεός* will establish him as a royal ruler to "reign over the house of Jacob forever." His kingdom will never end (1:33). However, in terms of the life of the son promised to Mary, Luke's portrayal envisages that her son will become, in the words of Robbins (2009, 109), a "Human body as Producer of Goodness & Righteousness" (Robbins, 2009, 109) (thirdspace wisdom rhetorolect). Luke uses wisdom rhetorolect to show that Mary's son will have a special relationship with God and the royal titles of *υἱὸς ὑψίστου* and *υἱὸς θεοῦ* provide the metaphoric language to express something of this relationship between Jesus and the Divine.

#### 4.2.4.2 Social and cultural texture manifesting prophetic rhetorolect

A further strand of social and cultural intertexture undergirds Luke's second- and thirdspace metaphorical use. In the ancient Mediterranean world, fatherhood was understood differently from modern Western conceptions of fatherhood. Fatherhood and kinship were shaped by honour-shame values, implying that, ideally, sons and daughters were to obey and to imitate their fathers as they sought to preserve and enhance the honour of the family (Malina and Rohrbaugh, 2003, 387; Pilch and Malina, 2016, 64–65). This means that, as discussed in chapter 2 of my thesis, the authority of a father was foundational to family discipline. The implication of Jesus being called the Son of God in 1:35 is that, in his role as God's Son, in the world of the text, Jesus is expected to honour God as Divine Father.

The application of these royal *topoi* to Jesus makes for a powerful reconfiguration of common modes of discourse in the light of the uniqueness of Jesus. They point to the presence of prophetic rhetorlect as described by Robbins (2009, 109), for example, specifically in the angel's declaration that Jesus is to be called υἱὸς ὑψίστου. Based on shared community memories of the firstspace experience of the geophysical land of Israel under the rule of king David and his successors, Second Temple Jewish communities were likely to have envisaged God as King, and Jesus as God's Prophet-Messiah sent by God (Robbins, 2009, 220–221). By implication, in the rhetoric of Gabriel's promise, Luke is declaring Jesus to be the fulfilment of such prophetic hopes. He is the royal υἱὸς θεοῦ who is now coming as σωτήρ, sent by God (secondspace prophetic visualisation of God's world) to establish God's rule over the people of God and to distribute God's justice to them (thirdspace prophetic visualisation in the space of blending). These elements point to the presence of prophetic rhetorlect in Luke's text.

As Robbins (2009, 220) points out, prophetic rhetorlects "create natural movement toward apocalyptic rhetorlect, where the emphasis is on the end of all earthly kings when God's Messiah in heaven becomes ruler of all God's created world." In this way, Luke's portrayal of Jesus in the infancy narratives prepares the way for the later development of the apocalyptic Christology of a text such as the Book of Revelation. Robbins (2009, 220) succinctly describes the potential development between apocalyptic and prophetic rhetorlect as follows:

In early Christian apocalyptic rhetorlect, God is conceptualised as Almighty Emperor not only over all the earth but over the entire universe, which is perceived to be God's empire. Along with God's rule as an emperor, Christ rules from heaven as king over all God's kingdom until the end of time, when Christ turns the kingdom over to God. In contrast to apocalyptic rhetorlect, early Christian prophetic rhetorlect conceptualizes God as king rather than emperor and Jesus as earthly Messiah rather than heavenly king.

In terms of the cultural intertexture between these royal *topoi* and the Graeco-Roman world as explored in § 4.2.3 above, the fact that Luke's rhetoric employs prophetic rhetorlect, results in Jesus being portrayed as the rightful ruler of Israel rather than his kingship being *universalised* as it would be in the case of apocalyptic rhetorlect. It thus constitutes less of a direct rhetorical critique of the rule of the Roman Emperor, who had also come to be known by such royal titles, than might be the case in predominantly apocalyptic discourse. This conclusion would then seem to support Brent's assessment (see § 4.2.3.4) that Luke's employment of royal *topoi* in reference to Jesus is likely to have been more readily embraced by Theophilus and his community in light of its consistency with the high regard

in which the Mediterranean world held the social and political peace realised in the Roman Empire through the embrace and promotion of the imperial cult.

My conclusion, then, that the Jesus birth narrative (and that of John) predominantly uses prophetic discourse – along with some apocalyptic, wisdom and priestly discourse – is consistent with the findings of scholars in respect of the Q material used by Luke later in his gospel (see also my discussion in §§ 3.2.6.2 and 3.8). As Sisson (2002, see esp. page 85) has demonstrated, the Q material predominantly comprises a blend between wisdom and prophetic discourse. Although some apocalyptic *topoi* occasionally are present alongside prophetic *topoi*, few Q discourses are genuinely apocalyptic – and the same can be said for Luke’s rhetoric.

#### **4.2.4.3 Miracle rhetorlect honours Mary as recipient of a miraculous conception.**

In Luke’s account of the annunciation, Gabriel functions as a prophet, declaring the promise of a son to Mary. The close connection between prophetic rhetorlect and that of apocalyptic suggests the potential value of considering the inclusion of other rhetorlects in the blend. In the world of the real author, the angel’s promise of a miraculous conception would involve a radical transformation of Mary’s body. In the world of the text, Mary’s firstspace appeal to the virgin state of her physical body and, by implication, the way things work in the natural world (1:34b), prepares the way for a secondspace emphasis on miracle discourse in the angel’s explanation (1:35) (see Robbins, 2009, 104–115). As a result, Mary will bear a son who will be holy and will be called *υἰὸς θεοῦ*. This supernatural conception, resulting from the act of the Holy Spirit *coming upon* Mary, will result in the transformation of her physical body, which is to be transformed by God (thirdspace miracle conceptualisation). The miraculous conception of the infant Jesus implies the ascription of further honour to him. These observations strongly point to the presence of miracle rhetorlect in Luke’s rhetorical blend.

As with the narrative of John’s annunciation and conception (see § 3.3), this miracle discourse serves rhetorically to ratify the honour ascribed to Jesus. Prescendi’s (2011, 5), study on the Italic birth myths of well-known ancient people again has relevance in respect of Jesus, as it shows how the extraordinary circumstances described in ancient myths are used to “confer authority on humans” (see the various insights of Prescendi outlined in § 3.3), and this has bearing on the honour ascribed to Jesus in his supernatural annunciation and conception.

Divine action is again implied in Luke's use of the passive *κληθήσεται* in 1:35 in reference to the angel's statement that the child will be called "Son of God" (see Marshall, 1978, 67, with reference to the use of *κληθήσεται* in 1:32). Elizabeth's response in 1:45, affirming Mary for having believed the angel's annunciation, points rhetorically to Mary's pregnancy being the fulfilment of divine promise. Divine action in Mary's miraculous conception is emphasised again in the words of her *Magnificat* (see especially 1:48–49). The miraculous action of God manifest in Mary's pregnancy comes to the fore again in narrative unit 6. Mary's eventual delivery (2:1–5) shows that Mary's body has been "[h]ealed and amazingly transformed" (Robbins, 2009, 109) (thirdspace miracle rhetorolect). Thus, these aspects point to the addition of miracle rhetorolect to the rhetorical blend.

Mary is ascribed honour in the world of the text. She has been favoured by God as the recipient of this miraculous conception. She has been chosen to be the mother of Jesus, the *υἱὸς ὑψίστου* who will receive the *θρόνον Δαυίδ*, and who, as *υἱὸς θεοῦ*, will reign over the house of Jacob for ever.

#### **4.2.5 Intertexture grounds the annunciation in Jewish faith and culture.**

##### **4.2.5.1 Oral-scribal intertexture between Luke 1:28–38a and other NT texts**

The declaration that Jesus is to be called *υἱὸς θεοῦ* manifests important intertexture with other parts of the NT. Since Luke the real author is likely to have been (at least) a second-generation Christian, he could have been influenced by the existing understandings of Jesus as the Son of God. Although it is conceivable that Luke had been exposed to at least some such references in the writings, for example, of Paul the Apostle, it is more likely that they reflect a common understanding already embraced by members of the early Jesus movement.

Assuming the validity of the four-source Synoptic Gospel hypothesis referred to earlier in §1.2, Luke had access to Mark's Gospel, along with Q material and his own unique material. While the opening words of some versions of Mark include the application of the title *υἱοῦ θεοῦ* in reference to Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Mark 1:1), there is some textual uncertainty about the originality of the inclusion. The title *υἱοῦ θεοῦ* certainly plays an important role in the

repetitive texture of the rest of Mark's Gospel.<sup>104</sup> These references may well have contributed to the development of Luke's own thinking about Jesus and divine sonship.

#### **4.2.5.2 Oral-scribal intertexture between Luke 1:28–38a and the Jewish Scriptures**

Luke's account of Mary's angelic encounter also manifests oral-scribal intertexture with portions of the Jewish Scriptures. Some of these related texts employed royal *topoi*, and had already been interpreted messianically during the first century C.E. (see § 4.2.5 below). There is also a manifestation of intertexture with the texts describing the calling of prophets, and also with the Abrahamic tradition. Rhetorically, Luke appears to be employing such intertexture to ascribe honour to Jesus, especially when he applies messianic and divine sonship titles to him. These rhetorical strategies manifest ideological texture that will also be explored in what follows.<sup>105</sup>

The Jesus annunciation account echoes references in the Jewish Scriptures to the calling of prophets (see Isa 6:1–13; Jer 1:4–10 and Ezek 1:1–3:11).<sup>106</sup> Oral-scribal intertexture between Luke's account of the conception of Jesus and other accounts of miraculous conception in the Jewish Scriptures is not as easily identifiable as in the case of John's annunciation. In the account of the annunciation of Jesus, Luke draws more generally on the prophetic and conceptual traditions of Jewish Scripture. Similar language is identifiable in Gen 18:14; 2 Sam 7:12b–14a; Pss 2:7–8; 89:19–30; Dan 2:44; 7:13–14; 8:17–19. By the time of Luke's writing, texts like these had come to be understood messianically in the various expressions of early Judaism and early Christianity,<sup>107</sup> and Luke would have known them from the LXX.

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<sup>104</sup> See Mark 1:11; 3:11; 8:38; 9:7; 12:6; 13:32; 14:6, 61; 15:39.

<sup>105</sup> See my discussion of ideological texture in § 4.8 below.

<sup>106</sup> In similar fashion, even though it is an angel who appears to Mary, the narrative echoes accounts of divine encounters reflected in the Jewish Scriptures: Jacob wrestling with God in the form of a man in Gen 32:22–32, Moses being called from a burning bush in Exod 3, and Samuel being called in the Shiloh shrine in 1 Sam 3, among others.

<sup>107</sup> See the study of Juél (1988) on messianic exegesis and its influence on the writings of the NT. See also studies on Jewish messianism in Dahl (1991), Charlesworth (1998) and J. J. Collins (1995, 1998b).

During times of suffering, often under harsh foreign rule and compromised local religious and political leadership, Second Temple Jewish communities turned conceptually to their firstspace remembered experience of King David's rule in the kingdom of Israel. Employing secondspace conceptualisation, they began to imagine an idealised anointed Davidic ruler, acting under God and establishing God's rule over Israel. This in turn developed into a thirdspace conceptual hope that in the end God's people would be united and restored as a nation under God, receiving God's justice, provision and honour, thus manifesting prophetic rhetorolect.<sup>108</sup>

As Green (1995, 94) points out, the fact that Luke repeatedly refers to the coming of God's salvific action further advances "the sense of eschatological anticipation in the narrative". Zechariah's prophetic doxology (1:68b) goes on to speak of the Lord God of Israel having looked favourably on his people and having redeemed them. In this way, the wording of the annunciation of the birth of Jesus prefigures important aspects of the rest of Luke's Gospel, as the infancy narratives point to God's promised intervention and deliverance for Israel.<sup>109</sup> The realisation that, in the infancy narratives of John and of Jesus, Luke is laying the foundation for later development of his theology, heightens the implied sense of eschatological anticipation (see Green, 1995, 1–2). As in the case of the narrative of John's annunciation and birth, Luke uses specific dominant and subdominant rhetorolects to develop the rhetography and rhetology of his birth and infancy narrative of Jesus.

In exploring this intertexture in greater depth, I will begin with a consideration of the relationship between these elements of royal *topoi* in Luke 1:32–35 and key texts from the Jewish Scriptures that had come to be interpreted messianically by the time of Luke's writing.

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<sup>108</sup> See §4.2.5.3 below, and the discussion on the development and idealisation of the concept of משיח and messianism in early Judaism in Talmon (1992).

<sup>109</sup> See also the prophetic declaration of Anna in Luke 2:38; the miraculous acts of healing and powerful spiritual and ethical teachings of Jesus throughout his adult ministry; and his eventual death on the cross and resurrection narrated in Luke 23–24 and interpreted in 24:46–47 in the following terms: "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

#### 4.2.5.3 Psalms 2 and 89 and 2 Sam 7:12b–14a provide the language of royal sonship.

The royal *topoi* of Luke 1:32–35 manifest intertexture with Psalm 2 and Psalm 89, royal psalms that are widely held to provide a conceptual and linguistic source for the writers of Second Temple Judaism and the NT. Most scholars accept the view of Gunkel (1985, 140–171) that the *royal psalms* of the HB comprise Pss 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132 and 144, and that they date from the pre-exilic period in reference to the Davidic monarchy (see also, Broyles, 1997, 24). The close intertexture between 1:32–35 and Pss 2 and 89 suggests that Luke knew these royal psalms and used the LXX Greek rendition as a source for these royal titles applied to Jesus.

Psalm 2:6–7 uses sonship language in reference to the king of Israel, who has been set upon Zion, God’s holy hill. According to 1:7b, God declares the king to be God’s son, begotten of God (Ps 2:7b LXX). Admittedly, the only connection between Ps 2 and Luke 1:35 is the use of the word “son”, but the psalm does point to an early understanding of royal sonship in the Jewish Scriptures. Similarly, the royal sonship of Ps 89 is likely to have played a role in the development of messianic thought in post-exilic Judaism and early Christianity. Written in a royal context, these verses contain references to *anointing* (ἔχρισα αὐτόν – Ps 88: 21 LXX), divine fatherhood and sonship (Πατήρ μου εἶ σύ, θεός μου καὶ ἀντιλήμπτωρ τῆς σωτηρίας μου – Ps 88:27b LXX), and eternal rule (καὶ θήσομαι εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος τὸ σπέρμα αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν θρόνον αὐτοῦ ὡς τὰς ἡμέρας τοῦ οὐρανοῦ – Ps 88:30 LXX),<sup>110</sup> all of which are relevant to this consideration of intertexture.

The application of royal titles to Jesus in Luke 1:32–35, along with the intertexture with Pss 2 and 89, raises the question as to the origin of messianism and its relationship to the rule of King David. The scholarly consensus is that invocations to the Davidic king as son of God in the Jewish Scriptures continued to be used as part of a process of conceptual idealisation during the exile and post-exilic period (Talmon, 1992; Laato, 1997). Messianism predominantly found its articulation in the apocalypticism of early Judaism, through a reconfiguration of the prophetic discourse of the Jewish Scriptures into apocalyptic

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<sup>110</sup> See the discussion of Broyles (1997, 24) regarding the contribution of Ps 72 and the idea of a redeeming king to the messianic ideal.

discourse in some Second Temple Jewish texts.<sup>111</sup> The people of Israel hoped for an eschatological liberation, but in Luke's infancy narratives this hope is predominantly expressed using prophetic rhetoric.

Royal language similar to that of Pss 2 and 89 is also evident in 2 Sam 7:12b–14a, which deals with God's covenant with David and the promise of an eternal kingdom. In 2 Sam 7:12b–14a, the prophet Nathan prophesies that God will raise up David's future offspring and establish his kingdom. Nathan goes on to prophesy that David will build a house for God's name and that God will establish it eternally. According to Nathan, God will be a father to David, and David will be a son to God. Such language, used in reference to king David, lent itself to the process of idealisation outlined above.

On the basis of this evidence, I suggest that the royal psalms of the Jewish Scriptures served as source material for Luke, at least on a conceptual level, as he reconfigures the royal titles in reference to Jesus. In practice, this reconfiguration is likely to have taken place via the broader influences shaping post-exilic eschatology and rising messianic hopes. These influences seem then also to have shaped Luke's writing, especially in 1:31–35, and provided him with the conceptual language for use in his unfolding rhetoric.

#### **4.2.5.4 Echoes of Gen 18:14 root the annunciation in Abrahamic traditions.**

Luke 1:36–37 establishes a narrational connection between Mary's pregnancy and that of Elizabeth, linking the account of John's birth to that of Jesus (see Johnson, 1991, 43). The wording and context of Gen 18:14 (LXX), in which Abraham is asked, "Is anything too wonderful [ἀδυνατεῖ] for the Lord?" is similar to the climax of the angel's message to Mary, declaring that "nothing will be impossible (ἀδυνατήσῃ) with God" (1:37), and the similarity suggests intentional recontextualisation.<sup>112</sup>

The close verbal intertexture between Luke 1:37 and Genesis 18:14, along with the general echo of the promise to Abraham and Sarah in Gen 18 of a miraculous birth in respect of

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<sup>111</sup> In respect of the DSS, see 4Q246, the *Pierced Messiah Text* and the *Messianic Apocalypse*. In respect of the literature of the OTP, see 4 *Ezra* 13.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Jer 32:27 HB.

Isaac, points to the presence of a promise-fulfilment motif in the Jesus annunciation narrative. This oral-scribal intertexture anchors Gabriel's annunciation to Mary in Israel's covenantal history. The birth of Jesus as God's Royal Saviour was to be a miraculous fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham. In terms of social and cultural texture in Luke's rhetoric, this intertexture contributes to the ascription of honour to Jesus.

#### **4.2.5.5 Cultural intertexture between Luke 1:28–38a and the OTP**

An analysis of cultural intertexture brings to light the extent to which Luke uses language similar in imagery to that found in other Second Temple Jewish texts. This cultural intertexture also manifests in Luke's account of Gabriel's announcement of the birth of Jesus, using royal and messianic language. This is the case even though the actual word *χριστός* only occurs later in the progressive texture of Luke's unfolding narrative. Similar royal titles can also be identified in apocalyptic-like texts from Daniel in the Jewish Scriptures (see Dan 7:13–14), and in passages from the OTP (see *1 En.* 46; 105:1–2 and parts of *4 Ezra*), as well as in passages from the DSS (4Q246 among others). As has been demonstrated by J. J. Collins (1998a) and the collection of essays in Oegema (2012) on apocalypticism in the Second Temple Period, Jewish apocalyptic literature (such as parts of the Book of Daniel in the Jewish Scriptures and the Book of Revelation in the NT), date from the Second Temple Period. The texts of *1 En.* 105:2 and *4 Ezra* 13:32, 37, 52 are examples of OTP passages that use the title "Son of God". The title is used in these texts in a singular and positive sense in reference to an expected Davidic king or messianic figure.<sup>113</sup> Given the intertexture with 2 Sam 7:12b–14a and Pss 2 and 89 (see § 4.2.5.3), these insights further emphasise the high degree of honour ascribed to Jesus in the annunciation.

I will now explore in greater detail the intertexture between Luke 1:28–38a, *1 Enoch*, and *4 Ezra*. This cultural intertexture manifests something of the eschatological thrust implied by the use of the concept Davidic *χριστός* in the literature of the Second Temple Period. It also reflects something of the hope for future redemption expressed in this usage.

#### **4.2.5.6 Cultural intertexture with *1 En.* 105:1–2, 46:1–4 and *4 Ezra* 13**

*First Enoch* is a composite early Jewish text representing the work of several writers, and dating from the period 300 to 100 B.C.E. (Isaac, 1983, 6–7). It provides cultural intertexture

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<sup>113</sup> See the discussion by Zimmermann (1998, 179, footnote 117) on this topic.

with a number of NT writings. Luke 1:32–35 manifests cultural intertexture with the royal language of divine sonship found in the brief apocalyptic chapter of *1 En.* 105. In that text, the voice of the Lord promises patience “[u]ntil I and my son are united with them forever in the upright paths of their lifetime and there shall be peace unto you, rejoice, you children of truth. Amen” (*1 En.* 105:1–2).

Isaac (1983, 10) is convinced that the language and thought of *1 Enoch* exercised a great deal of influence over the world and thought of the NT, including that of the book of Luke. According to him, this influence helped to mould “New Testament doctrines concerning the nature of the Messiah, the Son of Man, the messianic kingdom, demonology, the future, resurrection, final judgment, the whole eschatological theatre, and symbolism” (Isaac, 1983, 10). Isaac’s views pose a question as to the nature and process of any such influence. It is highly unlikely that Luke had direct access to the wording of *1 Enoch*. Rather, it is more likely that Luke 1:32–35 and *1 Enoch* represent a common conceptual and theological wellspring of early Jewish terminology available to both authors.

Furthermore, the surprising degree of similarity between the language of Luke 1:32–34 and that of *4 Ezra* 13, suggests at least some degree of cultural intertexture between the two texts.<sup>114</sup> Both refer to the *son of the Most High* and *son of God* (see *4 Ezra* 13:37, 52). *Fourth Ezra* 13 describes the sixth of a series of seven visions of Ezra in which he wakes from sleep in fear and prayerfully requests that the *Most High* interpret the vision for him. *Fourth Ezra* 13.21–58 records the distinctly messianic explanation then offered to Ezra in answer to his prayer. He is told that “the days are coming when the Most High will deliver those who are on the earth” (13.29). The son of the Most High is to be revealed at some future time, following a sequence of apocalyptic events in which the Son of God is to play a pivotal role (see 13.37, 52). A closer comparison shows the depiction of the Son of God in *4 Ezra* to be more cosmic in nature than the strictly national focus of Jesus’ role in Luke 1. Since, according to the scholarly consensus, the original text of *4 Ezra* dates to circa 80 or 90 C.E., that is, a few decades after the writing of Luke’s Gospel, it is highly unlikely that Luke knew the text of *4 Ezra*. It can thus be assumed that Luke is not in any way reciting its wording.

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<sup>114</sup> The bulk of *4 Ezra* is commonly held to have been authored by a Jewish author circa 100 C.E. (Myers, 1974, 129–131; Robinson, 2000 [1976], 247, 315). Metzger (1983, 517–520) agrees with the consensus view that Christian authors added chapters 1, 2 and 15 to chapters 3–14, which comprise the text sometimes referred to as the *Ezra Apocalypse*.

Nonetheless, the similarity reflects cultural intertexture that helps to clarify what Luke does rhetorically with the titles, υἱὸς ὑψίστου and υἱὸς θεοῦ in his writing.

At the time of Luke's writing, some of the messianic texts of the OTP, influenced as they were by "proto-apocalyptic" discourses from the Jewish Scriptures, including Isa 56–66, Haggai, Zech 1–14 and Ezek 38–39, had begun to reconfigure the language of messianic and redeemer figure expectations as apocalyptic discourse, as in the case of the Qumran community. While Luke uses similar titles in reference to Jesus, he does something different with them rhetorically, creating prophetic rather than apocalyptic discourse. It is possible, though, that streams of influence from Second Temple Judaism represented in texts such as *4 Ezra* 13, influenced the shape of later developments in Christology, such as that of the Book of Revelation, perhaps because prophetic rhetorolects "create natural movement toward apocalyptic rhetorolect" (Robbins, 2009, 220).<sup>115</sup> Contrary to texts such as *4 Ezra*, in line with other early Christian writers, Luke tends to interpret "portions of the Torah and the Psalms, as well as the narrative and oracular prophetic writings, as 'prophetic' discourse" (Robbins, 2009, 225).<sup>116</sup>

#### **4.2.5.7 Cultural intertexture with DSS text, as well as with Roman imperial cult**

I turn now to an investigation of aspects of Luke's cultural intertexture with an Aramaic textual fragment from the DSS, known as 4Q246. This text reveals a marked similarity to the titular reference of Luke 1:32 and 35.<sup>117</sup> Although 4Q246 only provides a limited insight into the rhetoric of the implied author, the surviving lines of text suggest that apocalyptic discourse shapes its character. The angel's promise to Mary in Luke 1:32–35, declaring that her son Jesus is to be called the υἱὸς ὑψίστου and υἱὸς θεοῦ, manifests striking similarity to references in 4Q246, making it an important conversation partner in the consideration of Luke's narrative of the infancy of Jesus. Although Luke would not directly have encountered

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<sup>115</sup> See my discussion on Robbins's observations regarding the relationship between prophetic and apocalyptic rhetorolects in § 4.2.4.2 above.

<sup>116</sup> See the discussion of Robbins (2009, 225) in respect of sources for prophetic rhetorolect in the Jewish Scriptures.

<sup>117</sup> Puech (1992, 98–131) originally published the text of 4Q246 in *RB*. I have used his published text in my discussion of column 2. Convinced by the arguments of Fitzmyer (1993, 157) in his interpretation of 4Q246, I have used his reconstruction and translation of column 1 in my discussion.

the text of which 4Q246 is a fragment, the similarities suggest that the real author of Luke's Gospel was culturally familiar with the Qumran practice of applying royal titles to a future eschatological messianic figure.

Royal sonship language with a messianic referent is also reflected in other Jewish writings from the Second Temple Period. These texts are likely to have been influenced predominantly by Jewish Scriptures using royal sonship language (see, for example, Pss 2; 89, and 2 Sam 7:12b–14a). However, royal sonship language was also used in the Graeco-Roman world in the Roman imperial cult. Such Graeco-Roman usage appears also to have contributed to the shape of Luke's rhetoric in the application of such royal *topoi* to Jesus. The gods and the Roman emperor were often spoken of as *σωτήρ*, not in the ultimate sense in which Jesus came to be understood in the Jesus community, but in the practical sense of protecting the people and rescuing them from the peril of enemies and perhaps even famines (see § 4.2.3.4 above). Luke uses these royal *topoi* to ascribe increasingly greater social honour and spiritual power to Jesus as God's royal *σωτήρ* in the progressive texture of his birth and infancy narratives. The rhetoric suggests that this is part of Luke's strategy to convince Graeco-Roman readers.

Read against this cultural backdrop, it seems reasonable to conclude that Jesus' future highly honoured role as *χριστός* is being proclaimed by Luke to be the fulfilment of the eschatological hope for God's redemptive intervention on behalf of the nation of Israel. Whereas the Qumran text, as in the case of other messianic texts from the DSS and the OTP, manifests apocalyptic rhetoric, the angelic annunciation in Luke's birth narrative of Jesus predominantly manifests prophetic discourse that has not been reconfigured into apocalyptic rhetoric.

#### **4.2.6 Rhetorical application of these elements by Luke**

Prophetic rhetoric is used by Luke to strengthen the rhetoric of his narrative as he develops his implied argument that Jesus is a royal figure ascending to David's throne in a secondspace generic conceptualisation of God's kingdom. Jesus embodies the fulfilment of the prophetic hope of the Jewish Scriptures. As I have sought to show in § 4.2.5 above, Luke draws on oral-scribal intertexture with the Jewish Scriptures, as well as on cultural intertexture with the thought reflected in DSS and OTP messianic texts, to portray the birth of Jesus as ushering in a new realm of well-being as God's people become recipients of God's justice under the rule of this Davidic king (thirdspace prophetic conceptualisation in the space of conceptual blending) (see Robbins, 2009, 109, 341).

#### 4.2.6.1 Blend of prophetic and apocalyptic rhetorlect: dynamic communication

The pervading presence of prophetic discourse in this narrative unit points to the dominance of this rhetorlect. As highlighted in chapter 3 above, prophetic rhetorlect is also the dominant mode of discourse in John's infancy narrative. In the case of John's infancy narrative, prophetic rhetorlect is supported by miracle and apocalyptic rhetorlects, and it is developed on a foundational layer of priestly rhetorlect (unit 1).

Typically, first-century miracle rhetorlect primarily focuses on "human bodies afflicted with paralysis, malfunction, or disease" (Robbins, 2009, xxiv). With this in mind, the accounts of Sarah (Gen 18:9–15; 21:1–7), Hannah (1 Sam 1:9–20) and Elizabeth (Luke 1:13–25), constitute similar accounts of miraculous conception. All three figures manifest physical barrenness that "becomes the site of social geography" (see Robbins, 2009, xxiv) for divine intervention. In each of these accounts, an angelic or anthropomorphic manifestation functions as a broker of God's power, initiating the healing process. Mary's conception is not typical of the more common emphasis on physical healing that tends to characterise miracle rhetorlect in the NT. To use key phrases from the description of miracle rhetorlect of Robbins (2007a, 169–170), Mary's body cannot strictly be described as an "afflicted body"; the angel Gabriel does serve as a supernatural "agent of God's power who renews and restores life"; and the angel's promise does imply that the Holy Spirit will produce a form of "new creation" that opposes "powers and affliction, disruption and death." Luke describes Mary as a *παρθένης* (1:27) who is said not to have known a man (1:34b). As a result of God's implied intervention, the reader discovers that Mary conceives and gives birth to a son (2:5–7). The angel's promise is hereby fulfilled in a later narrative unit.

As with the John infancy narrative, there are also elements of apocalyptic rhetorlect in the narrative of Jesus' annunciation. As pointed out in chapter 3 above, apocalyptic discourse is not only expressed in the form of eschatological hope. In line with the thinking of Wanamaker (2002, 134) and Carey (2012, 6–10), apocalyptic discourse can be expressed in a wide range of *topoi*. As in the case of John, Luke uses elements of apocalyptic discourse in this narrative unit in the following ways:

- (1) Mary encounters Gabriel the angel as a heavenly intermediary (Luke 1: 26–38);

- (2) as in the case of the angel's appearance to Zechariah, the angel is said to have been sent by God, hinting at the idea that God, dwelling in an alternative world, is favourably aware of Mary (1:26–28); and
- (3) as in the case of Zechariah, Mary experiences a form of vision and/or an audition in her encounter with Gabriel in which she is given a specific revelation regarding the unique nature of the son promised to her, whom she is to name Jesus (1:31).

This apocalyptic discourse plays a supportive role in Luke's rhetoric, contributing to the progressive texture and rhetorology of Luke's narrative. The summarised genealogy of Jesus' earthly father traces the lineage of Joseph back to King David (Luke 1:27). This contributes to an emphasis on the royal aspect of the future identity and role of Jesus. This point has already surfaced earlier in my thesis in the analysis of the repetitive texture of Luke's account of Zechariah's *Benedictus* (§ 3.6.2.3), and in the analysis of repetitive texture and intertexture expressed in narrative unit 2 (see §§ 4.2.2.2–4.2.2.4; 4.2.5). The prominent place given to prophetic rhetorology in the narrative of Jesus' annunciation suggests that the fulfilment of the eschatological hopes and aspirations of God's people plays a key role in Luke's understanding of Jesus. The narrative of the infancy of Jesus ascribes increasing honour to Jesus, until it eventually becomes clear that he is God's *χριστός*.

#### 4.2.6.2 The rhetorology of the text builds Luke's argument.

The implied rhetorology of the middle texture of narrative unit 2 uses at least two enthymemes to express the rhetorology. The first enthymeme could be set out as follows:

- Rule: Virgins cannot become pregnant (1:34).
- Case: The Holy Spirit and the power of the Most High will impregnate you while you will remain a virgin (implied in 1:26–38).
- Result: The child born will be holy and will be called Son of God – both the Holy Spirit and God whose power is involved are implied in the child born (1:35).

A second enthymeme in Luke's rhetorology could be set out as follows:

- Rule: Nothing is impossible with God (1:37).
- Case: Elizabeth in her old age, beyond child-bearing days, is pregnant (1:36).
- Result: You can become pregnant even though you are a virgin and have never "known" a man, since God is involved (1:35–37).

And a third enthymeme could be set out as follows:

- Rule: Non-sexual procreation by divine power is greater than sexual procreation enabled by divine power.
- Case: Jesus was created by direct divine intervention and John was created by divinely enabled human procreation.
- Result: Jesus is greater than John.

These enthymemes undergird Luke's implied rhetorology that develops the narrative of the "logic of rhetorical reasoning" in Luke's writing (Robbins, 2009, 16). Luke's argument is important for the overall message of his infancy narratives, and for the message of his gospel as a whole. At this point he is arguing for the ascription of honour to Jesus as a supernaturally announced and divinely conceived *υἱὸς θεοῦ*. At this point in the progressive texture and unfolding rhetorology, when compared with the juxtaposed annunciation narrative of John (1:5–25), the circumstances around the ancestry of Jesus' parents and the geophysical location of the angelophany and supernatural annunciation, the text suggests that John is the more highly honoured of the two. Nonetheless, it will become increasingly clear in the progressive texture that, as the narrative unfolds, Luke is arguing that the birth of Jesus constitutes the birth of an eschatological royal figure.

Narrative unit 2 is the first unit in a series of Jesus infancy narratives in which the progressive texture is developed in a structural juxtaposing and interweaving with the narrative of John's infancy. In the internal progressive texture of narrative unit 2, verses 36–37 link the account to what follows in 1:39, in which Mary hastens to Elizabeth after the angel's departure. The implication in terms of Luke's progressive texture is that, if Elizabeth, the barren one, has miraculously conceived as promised, then Mary's pregnancy will also be the result of a divine miracle. The degree of difference in the comparative ascriptions of honour is complex. The conception of Jesus is the greater of the two miracles in some regards. Jesus' conception is a miracle that occurs outside of sexual activity, whereas John's conception occurs within normal sexual activity, in spite of Elizabeth's advanced age. However, at this stage in the progression of the two interwoven and juxtaposed narratives, the honour ascribed to John in the text still tends to be greater than that ascribed to Jesus.

#### **4.2.7 Closing texture: Conclusion to the account (Luke 1:38b)**

Narrative unit 2 closes with a brief statement referring to Gabriel's departure from Mary (Luke 1:38b).

### **4.3 JESUS HONOURED IN THE WORDS OF MARY'S *MAGNIFICAT* (LUKE 1:39–56)**

In the opening-middle-closing texture's weaving together and juxtaposing of the two infancy narratives, the next narrative unit (unit 3) begins by setting the scene for Mary's doxology. The opening texture describes Mary's visit to her relative Elizabeth, the mother of John (1:39–45). The middle texture of narrative unit 3 comprises a doxological poem: Mary's *Magnificat* (1:46–55). The closing texture in 1:56 then links this narrative unit to the one that follows by means of a link phrase that explains that, after a period of about three months, Mary returns home (1:56).

#### **4.3.1 Opening texture in which Mary visits Elizabeth (Luke 1:39–45)**

The opening texture of narrative unit 3 tells of Mary hastily setting off for the hill country, to a town in Judea to visit Elizabeth her relative (1:39). According to Johnson (1991, 43), these verses serve "to advance the story . . . to advance the reader's understanding of the story". This aspect once again points to the use of progressive texture. The connection between the two figures, already established in 1:36–37, provides an opportunity for narrational development. Nolland (1989, 62) observes that "[t]he visit of Mary to Elizabeth marks the intertwining of the destinies of the two heroes of Luke's infancy gospel and makes yet more explicit the subordination of John to Jesus". The scene is set for Mary's *Magnificat* (1:46–55). Elizabeth remains in seclusion for the first five months of her pregnancy and Mary's angelic encounter takes place in the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy. By stating in the closing texture of this unit that Mary remained with Elizabeth for three months (1:56), followed by the reference in 1:57 to the time having come for John's birth, the narrative implies that Mary is present for the birth of John (Nolland, 1989, 74).

##### **4.3.1.1 Luke's rhetography continues to appeal to the imagination.**

The mention of Mary's visit to Elizabeth in a town in the Judean hill country uses rhetography to begin to set the scene for what follows, thereby emphasising unique aspects of the context being set. The mention of "a town in the hill country of Judea" (1:39) employs firstspace geophysical reality to connect the narrative to the introduction of Zechariah in 1:5–7 in the opening texture of narrative unit 1 (see § 3.1.1.1). This reference to the firstspace reality of Zechariah and Elizabeth's hometown in the Judean countryside reminds implied readers of their priestly credentials and their connection to the temple (secondspace). In the thirdspace of conceptual blending, Luke uses priestly rhetorolect to set Elizabeth up as beneficiary of God's holiness and purity, via her Aaronic ancestry and

marriage to Zechariah, and thus as a fitting oracle to communicate the blessings about to be declared concerning Mary and her child.

Luke's description of Mary's entry into Elizabeth's home is the focus of Luke's rhetography. Elizabeth's household now provides the specific context for Mary's encounter with Elizabeth. The firstspace setting of a family home shifts the narration to the use of wisdom rhetorolect. Luke is appealing to implied readers familiar with the rural village spaces of the ancient Mediterranean world to conceptualise Mary and Elizabeth and their promised infants as God's children (secondspace), ready now to produce goodness and righteousness in the lives of God's people through their offspring (thirdspace).

#### **4.3.1.2 Elizabeth declares Mary to be blessed.**

When Mary enters Elizabeth's home, the movement of John in utero acknowledges the entry of the woman who will be the mother of Jesus (*ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ κυρίου μου* – 1:43), ascribing her honour. The juxtaposition of the two annunciation narratives highlights a further contrast, this time between Elizabeth's affirmation of Mary in 1:42 and Gabriel's rebuke of Zechariah in 1:9–20. The narrative of John's annunciation suggests an implied rhetorical critique of Zechariah's disbelief as one called and set apart to serve as a priest in the service of God. This is contrasted with Elizabeth's affirmation of Mary for her belief, calling her *μακαρία ἡ πιστεύουσα* (1:45). In the ancient Mediterranean cultural milieu, belief and faith were related to the values of reliability, personal loyalty and commitment, rather than intellectual assent. Faith was understood to be a social bond that forged relationships of trust and allegiance (Malina and Rohrbaugh, 2003, 359; Malina, 2016a, 67–70). Mary is being commended for her trust in the reliability of the angel's promise, and she herself models such attitudes of loyalty and commitment in her response to the angel.

Furthermore, Elizabeth refers to Mary as *ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ κυρίου μου* (1:43), recognising Mary's unborn son as the *κύριος*. This is consistent with Gabriel's reference to him as *υἱὸς ὑψίστου* and *υἱὸς θεοῦ* at his annunciation (1:32). Elizabeth's affirmation of Mary in the phrase, "blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord" (Luke 1:45), with its use of promise-fulfilment language, concludes the introduction section. The opening texture hereby climaxes with repetitive texture that connects it conceptually, by way of contrast, to the account of Zechariah facing consequences for his disbelief (Luke 1:18–20). Mary the mother of Jesus is thus honoured as a woman of virtue.

#### 4.3.1.3 Jesus is declared as the *κύριος*.

Elizabeth's reference to Mary as *ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ κυρίου μου* (1:43) mentioned above is noteworthy as the first reference to Jesus as *κύριος*. Rowe (2006, 49) warns that this identification of Jesus as *κύριος* ought not to be prematurely conceptualised, albeit on the basis of evidence from intertexture or argumentation from etymology. It is noted that *κύριος* in this case qualified as *μου*. With the exception of quotations of Ps 110:1, uses of *κυρίου μου* refer to an earthly master (see Luke 12:45; 16:3). The personalisation of this term to Elizabeth serves as a warning not to rush too quickly to a messianic interpretation. Rowe (2006, 49) argues that in Luke's writing, "the *κύριος* duality necessitates thinking of the identity of the Lord as constructed in the Lukan narrative in a much more complex and dynamic way than only in terms of simple, direct identification" (Rowe, 2006, 49). In Rowe's view, the identity of a biblical character is to be established on the grounds of character development within the narrative itself. This is consistent with Robbins's understanding of progressive texture (Robbins, 1996a, 46–50; 1996b, 8–14), and it is particularly relevant in the case of narrative genre such as this.

Inspired by the work of Hans Frei (1993, 1997), Rowe argues that character development is a more accurate description of the means by which Luke develops his Christology. In his view, understood in the light of "the dramatic movement of 1:43 in the narrative" and Luke's frequent use of the title *κύριος* in reference to the God of Israel, "the narrative bespeaks a kind of unity of identity between YHWH and the human Jesus within Mary's womb" (Rowe, 2006, 45).<sup>118</sup> This resonance is accentuated by the fact that the account of Mary's visit to Elizabeth (1:39–45) marks the first appearance of the character of Jesus in Luke's narrative. Referencing the work of Harvey (1965, 52), Rowe is convinced that, from a literary perspective, the importance of the first introduction of a character into the "web of relationships" of a narrative cannot be overstressed. This serves to emphasise the importance in Luke's rhetoric of this first reference to Jesus as *κύριος* on the occasion of his entry into the narrative, albeit as an unborn infant. Rowe refers to Harvey's observation that interpersonal relationships define much of who we are, and that this also holds for characters in a literary work. The fact that in Luke 1:43 and 76, and again in 2:11, the referent of *κύριος* changes from God to Jesus is thus part of the development of Luke's

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<sup>118</sup> See Luke's own numerous uses of *κύριος* to refer to YHWH in the immediate context: 1:38, 43, 45 and 46.

rhetology in the progressive texture of the infancy narratives as an increasing degree of honour is ascribed to Jesus. Luke is developing the progressive texture of narrative with increasing clarity as it moves towards the overt proclamation of the messiahship of Jesus in the events of Jesus' birth, clarifying the subordination of John to Jesus. The ascription of honour increases in intensity until eventually in 2:11 the titles of σωτήρ, χριστός and κύριος are applied to Jesus, all in one verse. Luke appears to be laying a conceptual and honour foundation in the infancy narratives upon which he plans systematically to build his account of the life, death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. In Elizabeth's response to Mary, as she enters her home, ascribed honour has begun to shift away from John and towards Jesus.

#### 4.3.2 Mary's doxology (Luke 1:46–55)

In response to Elizabeth's blessing, the voice of Mary now delivers a challenging doxology in the words of the *Magnificat* (1:46–55).<sup>119</sup> Consistent with the scholarly classification of HB hymns into literary types, Brown (1979, 355–357) categorises the *Magnificat* as a hymn of praise, similar in literary form to the commonly agreed-upon hymns of praise, such as Pss 8; 29; 100; 114; 145–150 (Brown, 1979, 355, footnote 354). In the same way that the voice of Zechariah will respond in doxology following the birth of his promised son later in the narrative (1:68–79), so the voice of Mary responds now in doxology in anticipation of the birth of her son. In poetic form, the doxology provides a theological emphasis and commentary on the meaning and significance of the events unfolding in the infancy narrative. The words emphasise God's covenantal purposes (see Green, 1997, 98). Luke achieves this emphasis by means of various rhetorical textures evident in the doxology, and these will now be explored in what follows.

Mary's voice declares her acceptance of the angel's annunciation, initially expressed in 1:38, thereby using progressive texture to move the narrative forward. Robbins (2016b, 44) helpfully points out that in Mary's doxology, declarations made by other voices in the narratives are being reconfigured. In this way the narrative creates an implied dialogue between the different voices. Robbins (2016b, 44) identifies five key reconfigurations: (1) Mary's declaration in 1:47 that her spirit ἠγαλλίασεν in God her Saviour repeats the angel's message to Zechariah concerning χαρά and ἀγαλλίασις; (2) Mary's statement in 1:48a that

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<sup>119</sup> My thesis assumes that the *Magnificat* is Mary's speech rather than that of Elizabeth, as portrayed in some ancient manuscripts (see the discussion in Fitzmyer, 1981, 65–66).

God has taken note (ἐπέβλεψεν) of her humble state reconfigures Elizabeth’s statement that God has “looked favourably on [her] (ἐπέιδεν) and [has taken] away the disgrace [she had] endured among [her] people” (1:25); (3) Mary’s statement in 1:48b that future generations will regard her as blessed (μακαριοῦσίν) reconfigures Elizabeth’s words to her declaring her to be blessed (μακαρία) for having believed in the fulfilment of the Lord’s promise to her; (4) Mary’s declaration in 1:49 that the Mighty One has done great things for her “uses, reconfigures, and embellishes” (Robbins, 2016b, 44) the language of Gabriel when he spoke to her of the δύναμις ὑψίστου (1:35); and (5) Mary’s statement in 1:54–55 that God has helped his servant Israel as an act of merciful faithfulness to the Abrahamic covenant and his descendants εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα reconfigures Gabriel’s statement to her in 1:32–33 regarding τὸν θρόνον Δαυὶδ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ. Each of these rhetorical reconfigurations contribute in some way to the development of the progressive texture of the series of narrative units, strengthening the gradual increase of honour ascribed to Jesus.

I turn now to an analysis of aspects of inner texture evident in this hymn of praise. I begin by considering repetitive texture in narrative unit 3.

#### **4.3.2.1 Repetitive texture emphasises God’s redemptive work in Jesus.**

How does this doxology fit into the storyline of Luke’s infancy narrative? Both C. F. Evans (2008) and Nolland (1989, 63) consider the *Magnificat* to be only “loosely tied to its present context”. However, Green (1997, 98) points out that, in spite of Mary’s doxology marking a pause in the flow of the overall narrative, Luke still manages to embed the piece in its literary context, an aspect overlooked by Evans and Nolland. One of the ways in which Luke embeds the *Magnificat* in the wider narrative is by means of repetitive texture that at times extends beyond this narrative unit. The doxology repeatedly uses key words and phrases that occur elsewhere in the infancy narratives, and even in the rest of Luke’s Gospel. In this way Luke effectively connects the *Magnificat* to Luke’s wider gospel narrative, foreshadowing and emphasising themes that become evident in the rest of the Lukan narrative (see Green, 1997, 98–99). Examples of these elements include the following:

- The word κύριος occurs in the accusative in 1:46. It also occurs in various forms throughout Luke 1:5–2:40 (a further twenty-six times). The many applications of the title to Jesus call for a careful consideration of the ways in which Luke understands Jesus to be the κύριος (see § 4.3.1.3 above.)

- The word θεός occurs in the dative in 1:47 of the *Magnificat*. It also occurs a further eighteen times in various forms in Luke 2:5–2:40, emphasising the element of sacred texture running throughout Luke’s infancy narrative. God is playing an important role in the events unfolding around the birth of Jesus.
- In 1:46, Mary’s voice declares that her soul magnifies (μεγαλύνει) the Lord, and in 1:58, Elizabeth’s neighbours hear that God has magnified (ἐμεγάλυνεν) his mercy toward her.
- In 1:47, Mary’s spirit rejoices (ἠγαλλίασεν) in God as her Saviour. Nouns with the same root as ἀγαλλιάω also occur in 1:14 and 44. This repetition strengthens the doxological element of the doxology. These doxological elements are all “related to the eschatological coming of God” (Green, 1997, 102).
- The reference to Mary’s addressing of God as her σωτήρ in 1:47 (τῷ θεῷ τῷ σωτήρῳ μου) is pivotal to the message of the *Magnificat*. Repetitive texture connects the concept of God’s salvation with the following: (1) the emphasis on salvation expressed in God having raised up a κέρασ σωτηρίας (1:69); (2) the fulfilment of God’s promises to save his people from their enemies (1:71); (3) the implication of the message of the *Benedictus* that John’s role is to prepare the way for Jesus, making God’s salvation known to his people (1:77); (4) the angel’s declaration to the shepherds that the birth of Jesus in the city of David is the birth of a σωτήρ ὃς ἐστὶν χριστὸς κύριος (2:11); and later, (5) after encountering the infant Jesus, Simeon identifies Jesus as χριστὸν κυρίου and says that he has witnessed God’s salvation (2:30).
- The repetitive texture relating to the concept of *salvation* also anticipates Luke’s concern with salvation in the wider work of Luke-Acts: (1) the voice of the narrator declares that all flesh will see the salvation of God (Luke 3:6); (2) salvation comes to a house because the head of the family is also a “son of Abraham”, and the Son of Man having come to “seek out and to save the lost” (Luke 19:9–10); (3) all who call on the Lord’s name will be saved (Acts 2:21); (4) this promise of salvation will hold true for the generations that follow (Acts 2:39); (5) the uniqueness of the name of Jesus for salvation is stressed (Acts 4:12); (6) Jesus has been exalted as Leader and Saviour (Acts 5:31); (7) Cornelius is told that Peter would give him a message by which he and his household would be saved (Acts 11:14); and (8) Peter declares to

the Jewish disciples that they will be saved by means of the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as will others who hear their message (Acts 15:11).

- In 1:48, Mary's voice, speaking in the third person, declares that God has recognised her lowly state. In 1:50 Mary says that God has looked upon her circumstances "with favour", and this is an expression of God's mercy (see Green, 1997, 103). This reference to the fact that God demonstrates "regard" for Mary's circumstances echoes 1:25, where God is also said to have looked upon Elizabeth with favour, that is, God has removed the shame of her barrenness.
- In 1:48, Mary states that she will be regarded as blessed (*μακαριοῦσιν*) by future generations, creating a parallel with the affirmation expressed to her by Elizabeth in 1:45 (*μακαρία ἡ πιστεύσασα*), mentioned in § 4.3.1.2 above.
- The term *ὁ δυνατός* with reference to God in 1:49 echoes the reference to *δύναμις* of the Most High in 1:35. In 1:37, the antithesis of *δύναμις* is encountered in the statement that "nothing will be impossible (*ἀδυνατήσῃ*) with God."
- Verse 49 refers to God having done great things (*μεγάλα*) for Mary. This repeats a theme evident in 1:15, where the angel promises that John will be great (*μέγας*) before the Lord. In a similar angelic promise to Mary, in 1:32 Gabriel has promised that Jesus will be great (*μέγας*) in the sight of God. The overall impact of this repetitive texture is an emphasis on God's great power at work in both the birth of John and of Jesus.
- The reference to the holiness of God's name in 1:49 (*ἅγιον τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ*) echoes the angel's earlier promise that Mary's son will be the "holy one" (*ἅγιον* – 1:35), making a theological connection between the character of Jesus and the character of God. Luke hereby ascribes a great deal of honour to Jesus.
- References to the *ἔλεος* αὐτοῦ in 1:50, and again to God's *ἐλέου* being remembered in 1:54, conceptually echo Elizabeth's greeting to Mary as one graced with favour in 1:42 (*εὐλογημένη σὺ ἐν γυναιξίν*). These references also conceptually manifest repetitive texture with Gabriel greeting Mary as *κεχαριτωμένη* in 1:28, and his encouragement to Mary not to be afraid in 1:30 because *εὗρες γὰρ χάριν παρὰ τῷ θεῷ*.

- The reference to Abraham’s seed in 1:55 echoes the reference to the blessed fruit of Mary’s womb in 1:44. These verses both emphasise God’s covenantal promise to Abraham in Genesis 22:18 that, through his seed, all nations would be blessed. The context of the song in the narrative at the time of Mary’s conception suggests that this repeated point suggests that the birth of Jesus fulfils God’s promise to Abraham, again implying the ascription of honour to Jesus in terms of his historic role.

Green (1997, 98–99) summarises the various connecting threads that he identifies between the *Magnificat* and other parts of Luke 1 and 2 as being “cast in the framework of a celebration of God’s redemptive coming”. These elements of parallel, echo, and repetitive texture call the attention of readers to an important point being made in the narrative: God’s powerful, gracious, merciful work of salvation towards those whose humility makes them receptive to God’s blessing, now being manifest, by implication, in the birth of Jesus as God’s *σωτήρ*, royal ascendant to the throne of David. Thus, although nothing in the *Magnificat* itself indicates the coming of a messianic figure, and although God alone is the bringer of mercy in the doxology, its various echoes and implications contribute to the progressive texture of the narrative and assist in preparing the way for the greater clarification to come in Luke 2:11 and 26.

The doxology also contrasts themes of God’s gracious mercy and favour expressed in the salvific acts of God that root it in the wider themes of Luke 1 and 2 and Luke-Acts, with the references to the acts of God’s judgement executed upon those who have exalted themselves in rebellious and pride-filled self-dependence, reliant only on their own wealth and power. God’s judgement on such people is expressed in references to God having scattered the proud (1:51b), dethroning the powerful (1:52a), and sending “the rich away empty” (1:53b). These references emphasise the might and power of God. Referenced in this way, the words of Mary’s doxology express worship to God in the context of the promised birth of Jesus and recognise the hand of God in these events, thereby ascribing honour to Jesus in the narrative of his infancy.

#### **4.3.2.2 Progressive texture builds the rhetoric of Mary’s doxology.**

The progressive texture internal to the *Magnificat* moves the doxology from the present experience of Mary (1:47–49) to future actions of God (1:50–53), and then on to include a reminder that these future benefits are an outcome of God’s past faithfulness (1:54–55). Mary’s present assurance leads to the conviction that God will act as deliverer in the future, based on the assurance derived from God’s faithful actions in the past. The progressive

texture is also carefully constructed around grammatically repetitive texture employing the repeated use of aorist verbs.

- The introductory references to Mary's present experience (1:47–49) climax with a statement about God's action on her behalf, using an aorist verb (*ἐποίησέν*), presumably in relation to God's choice of Mary to bear God's son.
- The future actions attributed to God in 1:50–53 begin with a general statement in 1:50, minus a verb. All the specific verbal statements from 1:51–53 take the aorist active form, expressing what is likely to be a prophetic assurance of God's future actions (see Hauck, 1934, 29): *Ἐποίησεν* (1:51); *διεσκόρπισεν* (1:51); *καθείλεν* (1:52); *ὑψώσεν* (1:52); *ἐνέπλησεν* (1:53); and *ἐξαπέστειλεν* (1:53).
- The two verbal statements serving as reminders of God's past faithfulness to Israel in accordance with the Abrahamic covenant (1:54–55) also both take the aorist (*ἀντελάβετο* – 1:54; *ἐλάλησεν* – 1:55).

Robbins (2016b, 47) has undertaken an analysis of the argumentative texture of the *Magnificat* from the perspective of lessons learnt from the *Progymnasmata* (see also Robbins, 1999). His approach provides insights into the argumentative texture of the doxology that is easily missed when Hebrew poetry provides the major interpretive lens. He points to a carefully developed argument in 1:46–48a in the progressive texture of the doxology. The doxology begins with an enthymeme involving an implied major premise or rule, a minor premise or case, and a conclusion or result, and I quote:

IMPLIED MAJOR PREMISE:

When the Lord God shows regard for the humiliation of the soul and spirit of one of his maidservants, the favoured woman praises the Lord God as her savior.

MINOR PREMISE

God has shown regard for the humiliation of the soul and spirit of his maidservant Mary.

CONCLUSION

Mary's soul magnifies the Lord and her spirit rejoices in God her savior.  
(Robbins, 2016b, 47)

In terms of the rhetology of the rest of the *Magnificat* (that is, 1:48b–55), Robbins (2016b, 47) suggests that 1:48b confirms the rationale of the enthymeme: Mary declares that future generations will regard her as being blessed. The series of prophetic verbal statements

about God's actions that follow, taking the aorist (1:49–53), providing a series of embellishments of the opening rationale. The series of aorist verbs climax in 1:54–55, where a recapitulation is provided of God's faithful past actions on behalf of Israel, Abraham and his seed, and his faithfulness is deemed in v. 55 to be "for ever." The argumentation of the *Magnificat*, in the view of Robbins (see 2016b, 47), fits *Herennium's* five-stage description of what constitutes "the most complete and perfect argument" (quoting from his *Rhetorica ad Herennium* – 2.18.28–19.3). The argumentation of the *Magnificat* can be outlined using these five categories as follows:

- The proposition: Enthymematically implied (see Robbins's suggestion for the implied major premise quoted above).
- The reason: The description of Mary magnifying the Lord and rejoicing in God's favour in spite of her lowly state (1:46–48a).
- The proof of the reason: The *Magnificat* supplies this in 1:48b in Mary's conviction that future generations will regard her as blessed. Robbins (see 2016b, 47) treats this as a "*rationis confirmatio*".
- The embellishment: A list of embellishments is provided in 1:49–53. Robbins treats this list as comprising two stanzas, the first running from 1:49–50, dealing with God's actions for Mary, and the second running from 1:51–53, dealing with God's actions for those φοβούμενοι αὐτόν (1:50).
- The resumé: Verses 54–55 provide a recapitulation, grounding future assurances in God's past faithfulness.

Mary celebrates God's goodness demonstrated in her conception by honouring God. In the process, great honour is ascribed to her son, whose conception has marked the dawning actualisation of all the prophetic hopes and promises reflected in the *Magnificat*. The ideological texture of the infancy narratives is being developed in the progressive texture and Luke is developing an argument for the ascription of ever-increasing honour to Jesus, while in the juxtaposed narrative of John's annunciation and birth, ascribed honour to John is decreasing.

#### 4.3.2.3 Sensory-aesthetic texture enhances the rhetography.

Sensory-aesthetic texture manifests in the following aspects of narrative unit 3:

- The metaphorical use of the verb *μεγαλύνω* in the phrase *Μεγαλύνει ἡ ψυχὴ μου* (1:46) and the use of the verb *ἀγαλλιάω* in the phrase *ἠγαλλίασεν τὸ πνεῦμά μου* (1:47), suggest that Mary is expressing her gratitude for the gracious actions of God in her life in the *zones of self-expressive speech* and *emotion-fused thought*.
- Such verbs used in the *Magnificat* express affection, favour and goodwill. Verse 48 states that future generations will regard Mary as blessed because, as stated in 1:50, (divine) mercy is extended to those who fear God. In 1:54 we learn that God’s mercy toward Mary has been remembered. The metaphorical reference to God having *scattered* those who are “proud in the thoughts of their hearts” (1:51), declares God’s judgement upon self-serving and haughty people. All these elements are expressed in the *zone of emotion-fused thought*.
- Mary’s doxology also metaphorically uses verbs and nouns that relate to organs and activities of the body. These metaphors can be identified, for example, in metaphorical and anthropomorphic references to the works of God, expressed in the *zone of purposeful action*. In 1:49, the Mighty One is said to have done great things for Mary. The reference to God as *ὁ δυνατός* is not in and of itself a metaphor, but the metaphoric aspect can be discerned in 1:51 in the reference to *ἐν βραχίονι αὐτοῦ*, by means of which God has *διεσκόρπισεν ὑπερηφάνους διανοίᾳ καρδίας αὐτῶν*. This metaphoric reference to God’s arm is expressed in the *zone of purposeful action* in terms of its reference to a body part used for performing actions. The word *καρδίας* is used metaphorically in the *zone of emotion-fused thought* in reference to human volition and rationality, envisaging the thirdspace goal of people being transformed as a result of encountering God’s justice and righteousness.

By evoking the senses and emotions, and by means of references to speech and action, rhetorically the doxology invites readers to join Mary in her positive response to God’s mercy, about to be demonstrated in the birth of Jesus. The sensory-aesthetic texture is used in the rhetology of the *Magnificat* to motivate readers to choose to join Mary in receiving and celebrating God’s redemptive actions in the world, abandoning greed and abusive actions, and in so doing, to avoid God’s acts of righteous judgement on evil. It is the pending birth of Jesus in fulfilment of the angel Gabriel’s promise that inspires Mary’s doxology. When readers respond accordingly, by participating in God’s transformative works, increasing degrees of honour will be ascribed to Jesus as God’s royal *σωτήρ*.

The poem also recognises God as the Mighty One who brings judgement upon those who are disobedient. In contrast to this judgemental dimension, the *Magnificat* has already declared that God's mercy is for τοῖς φοβουμένοις αὐτόν (1:50). There are positive consequences of divine favour for those who respond to God's actions with holy fear. According to BDAG (1979), the word φοβέω can at times also be used with these positive connotations of reverence, or a profound sense of respect, with the possible connotation of a "fear of offending". In Luke's infancy narratives, Zechariah, Mary, Zechariah and Elizabeth's neighbours and relatives, recipients of God's mercy, and the shepherds are all referred to as being fearful, troubled, amazed or respectful in response to the things they witness, using forms of the noun φόβος, or verbs φοβέω (see 1:12, 29–30, 50; 2:9–10), διαταράσσω (1:29), and θαυμάζω (1:63; 2:18). Luke is setting up repetitive texture and sensory-aesthetic texture, used rhetorically to stress the importance of these supernatural events in the storyline of the narrative.

In the ideological texture of the *Magnificat*, Mary's voice expresses reverence and openness to God who has "lifted up the lowly" (1:52) and "filled the hungry with good things" (1:53). Luke's use of these metaphors portrays God at work on behalf of people who are poor and disempowered (1:51–52). God is said to effect a reversal of socially accepted power relationships, acting on behalf of those who are disempowered (1:51–52). The rhetorology of the *Magnificat* hereby potentially inspires a sense of awe, appealing as it does to the imagination and emotions of its readers.

I turn now to the question of oral-scribal intertexture in the *Magnificat*.

#### **4.3.2.4 Oral-scribal intertexture between Luke 1:46–55 and the Jewish Scriptures**

The rhetorology of the *Magnificat* is made all the more convincing by means of oral-scribal echoes from the Jewish Scriptures. The *Magnificat* manifests a close relationship with texts from the Jewish Scriptures. Mary's doxology echoes hymns of praise spoken in response to God's intervention on behalf of God's people in the cultural heritage of Israel, including the songs of Moses (Exod 25:1–18), Miriam (Exod 15:19–21), Deborah (Judg 5:1–31), Asaph (1 Chr 16:8–36), Judith (Jdt 16:1–17), and Hannah (1 Sam 2:1–11). Marshall (1978, 79) recognises the expression of Jewish thought in the sentiments of Mary's doxology, especially in its particularistic rather than universal thought. Brown (1979, 358–359) holds a similar position and provides a detailed table indicating a variety of possible textual precedents in the Jewish Scriptures echoed in the *Magnificat*. The doxology anticipates the

re-enactment of God's faithful actions of the past on behalf of Israel, Abraham and his seed "forever" (1:54–55).

In Robbins's (1996b, 49) view, the *Magnificat* reconfigures a long tradition in the Jewish Scriptures of barren Israelite women who have conceived in their old age and born a son. The question to be asked is, which stories constitute the strongest intertexts? The close intertexture between Mary's *Magnificat* and Hannah's song in 1 Sam 2:1–11, invites a close analysis of the relationship between these two texts. Whereas, in John's birth narrative it is his father Zechariah who responds in doxology, in the case of Jesus' birth, it is his mother. This presents a close parallel between Mary's doxology and Hannah's song in 1 Sam 2:1–10. Close structural parallels also suggest the possibility that Luke has modelled Mary's *Magnificat* on Hannah's song.

The following structural parallels are evident: introduction (Luke 1:46a // 1 Sam 2:1a);<sup>120</sup> doxology (Luke 1b–47 // 1 Sam 2:1b); antagonists are dealt with (Luke 1:51 // 1 Sam 1:1c, 3a); the powerful are humbled (Luke 1:52 // 1 Sam 1:4); those in need are provided for (Luke 1:53 // 1 Sam 1:5); God's grace is extended to the faithful (Luke 1:54–55 // 1 Sam 1:9a, 10b); and concluding comments (Luke 1:56 // 1 Sam 1:11).

These observations highlight elements of internal integrity in the narrative of Jesus' annunciation. Jesus will be conceived as a result of the Holy Spirit's miraculous intervention (1:32–33). The narrative thus demonstrates internal consistency in that in the real world, Joseph, not being the biological father, would be less likely to respond in praise and worship to the news of her pregnancy, in both infancy narratives a doxology is attributed to the parent who receives the angelic annunciation (see 1:46–55; 67–79).

The *Magnificat* also manifests intertexture with several passages from the Psalms. Pss 48, 89, 98, 102, 103, and 110 appear to have been special resources for the language of the *Magnificat*. The second part of Luke 1:49, ascribing holiness to God's name (ἅγιον τὸ ὄνομα) implies reference to God's exalted name and echoes the same idea expressed in Pss 98:3 LXX (τῷ ὀνόματί . . . ἅγιόν ἐστιν) and 103:1 (τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ἅγιον αὐτοῦ). The parallel concepts of ἅγιος (Luke 1:49) and τοῖς φοβουμένοις αὐτόν (1:50) in the *Magnificat*, echo a similar parallel in Ps 110:9 LXX (ἅγιον καὶ φοβερὸν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ). The idea of God's ἔλεος resting upon τοῖς

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<sup>120</sup> Nolland (1989, 68) draws attention to the fact that the LXX version of Hannah's song is also introduced with the words, καὶ εἶπεν, again suggesting close intertexture.

φοβουμένοις αὐτόν expressed in Luke 1:50 echoes Ps 102:17 LXX (τὸ δὲ ἔλεος τοῦ κυρίου . . . ἐπὶ τοὺς φοβουμένους αὐτόν). The phrase εἰς γενεὰς καὶ γενεάς in 1:50 echoes εἰς γενεὰν καὶ γενεά in Ps 48:12 LXX and ἐν γενεᾷ καὶ γενεᾷ in Ps 89:1 LXX, although the *Magnificat* departs from the exact LXX wording in both instances.<sup>121</sup>

Luke appears to be placing Mary in the Jewish Scriptural tradition of barren women singing praise to God in response to miraculous conception. But can the same be said in respect of accounts of virgins in the Jewish Scriptures? Robbins (1996b, 48–54) has presented a case for an alternative reading of the relevant intertexture of the *Magnificat* since, as a strategy, SRI intentionally leaves no stone unturned in its analysis. Robbins introduces the topic of a selective canon. He suggests that vested interest sometimes leads interpreters to limit their selection of potential intertexture to texts that are “positive”, ignoring more negative possibilities. In his view, this amounts to a “canon within a canon” bias (Robbins, 1996b, 48–54). Robbins would probably argue that the examples of intertexture I have highlighted thus far manifest just such a degree of bias towards texts that reinforce a positive reading of the *Magnificat*. He suggests that more “negative” text portions be included for consideration in the analysis. Robbins (1996b, 54) suggests that

the virgin Mary refers to “her” humiliation in Luke 1:48a, not Elizabeth’s. Mary’s “low estate,” as it is often translated, results from conception outside of marriage, not absence of conception within marriage. Mary’s rationale for praising God is that God has shown special regard for the pregnancy that was forced upon her.

Considering Mary’s reference in Luke 1:48 to the Lord having had regard for τὴν ταπείνωσιν τῆς δούλης αὐτοῦ, Robbins (1996b, 52–54) takes his cue from the work of Schaberg (1987, 1992) by turning his attention to accounts in the Jewish Scriptures of sexually dishonoured women. He reminds his readers of Deut 22:23–24, which specifically addresses situations involving betrothed women who have been dishonoured. According to the Deuteronomy text, in the case of a παρθένος “engaged to be married” (μεμνηστευμένη) to an ἀνδρὶ, being found to have lain with an ἄνθρωπος in a city, the two are to be taken beyond the city gates and stoned to death. The woman is to be punished “because she did not cry for help in the town”, in spite of the fact that the man “violated (ἐταπείνωσεν) his neighbour’s wife” (Deut 22:23–24). The Lukan account has several similarities: The language of virgin, betrothal,

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<sup>121</sup> The phrase εἰς γενεὰν καὶ γενεά in Psalm 48:12 LXX translates וְדָר וְדָר in Psalm 49:12 HB. Marshall (1978, 83) regards εἰς γενεὰν καὶ γενεά as a Hebraism, probably based on the fact that this exact form is also found in *T. Levi* 18.9, though never in the LXX. If this is the case, Luke may have picked up the expression via contact with Jewish Christians.

and humiliation in the Deuteronomy precept is identical to that of the Lukan account. Mary is a virgin, and she is engaged to a man (παρθένον ἐμνηστευμένην ἀνδρί – Luke 1:27). Robbins (1996b, 53) and Schaberg (1987, 1992) treat Mary's reference in the *Magnificat* to her τὴν ταπείνωσιν (1:48) as the “humiliation” of her pregnancy. In their opinion, this connects her to a long tradition of “dishonourable” women in the Jewish Scriptures (see Gen 34:2; Judg 19:24; 20:5; 2 Sam 13:12–32; Lam 5:11; and Ezek 22:10–11). Robbins (1996b, 52–54) is critical of interpreters such as Brown (1979) and Fitzmyer (1981), for neglecting these possible intertexts.

Robbins and Schaberg are perhaps correct in suggesting that such an alternative intertexture would heighten the import of Mary's celebration of God's reversal, now experienced in and through these mighty acts of God (1:48b). The force of such a reversal would lend great rhetorical power to the *Magnificat*. It could be viewed as a doxological and prophetic celebration of the liberating acts of God in Mary's life.

However, if we take seriously the actual rhetoric of Luke's rhetology in the progressive texture of his infancy narratives thus far, this line of reasoning is not convincing. It ignores Luke's actual rhetology for the origin of Mary's pregnancy lying, as it does, in the actions of the Holy Spirit in her life (1:31–37). If the element of reversal for which Robbins and Schaberg argue is present as a motivation for Mary's doxology, the rhetology of Luke's progressive texture would imply an argument motivated by the social shame that has resulted from the actions of the Holy Spirit, rather than from the fact that “God has shown special regard for the pregnancy that was forced upon her”, as Robbins (1996b, 54) has suggested. In light of this, the weight of the argument lies more in favour of a positive reading of God's favour shown to Mary, *in spite of* her lowly state.

Rhetorically, the oral-scribal intertexture with the Psalms and with Hannah's song suggests that Mary's doxology is rooted in the more positive traditions of the Jewish Scriptures, as she celebrates the coming birth of Jesus as the promised υἱὸς ὑψίστου, the υἱὸς θεοῦ, set to inherit the θρόνον Δαυίδ. This lends rhetorical authority to the ascription of honour to Jesus implied in the *Magnificat* and argues against a negative reading of Mary's pregnancy.

#### **4.3.2.5 Social and cultural intertexture with the OTP and the Mediterranean world**

Mary's *Magnificat* also manifests cultural intertexture with literature from the OTP. Nolland (1989, 69) highlights a parallel between the words, “for he has looked with favour on the

lowliness of his servant” (1:48), and the similar phrase in *4 Ezra* 9:45, where Zion, personified as a woman, declares: “God heard your servant and had regard for my afflicted state, and considered my distress and gave me a son.” In Luke’s narrative, Mary speaks of God’s goodness to Israel in a general sense. At the same time, she speaks of her unique experience of God’s goodness in her personal life. Furthermore, the references to antagonists being dealt with and powerful people humbled in Luke 1:51–53 also echo expressions of eschatological hope of reversal expressed in apocalyptic literature of Second Temple Judaism. The underlined words in the following comparison of English translations of *1 En.* 46:4–6a and Luke 1:51–53 demonstrate such elements of cultural intertexture:

Luke 1:51–53	<i>1 En.</i> 46:4–6a
<p>“<sup>51</sup> He has shown strength with his arm; <u>he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.</u> <sup>52</sup> <u>He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,</u> and lifted up the lowly; <sup>53</sup> he has filled the hungry with good things, and <u>sent the rich away empty</u>”.</p>	<p>“<sup>4</sup> This Son of Man whom you have seen is the One who would <u>remove the kings and the mighty ones from their comfortable seats and the strong ones from their thrones.</u> He <u>shall loosen the reins of the strong</u> and crush the teeth of the sinners. <sup>5</sup> He shall <u>depose the kings from their thrones and kingdoms.</u> <sup>6</sup> The faces of the strong will be slapped and filled with shame and gloom.”</p>

**Figure 9: The comparison between Luke 1:51–53 and *1 En.* 46.4–6a**

In the case of *1 En.* 46.4–6a, the text refers to the actions of an eschatological Son of Man, while in the case of the *Magnificat* the text refers to the actions of God as Mary’s Saviour. In Luke’s narrative, Mary is responding to the fulfilment of Gabriel’s promise that she will bear a child who will be called υἱὸς ὑψίστου and υἱὸς θεοῦ. The *Son of Man* of the *1 Enoch* passage is eschatological. A close parallel is evident between the eschatological divine action of reversal described in *1 En.* 46, bringing down the rich and powerful, and the actions of God reflected in the words of Mary’s doxology. Luke, however, has a different application. In the *Magnificat*, the idea is not embedded in a psalm of praise rather than in an apocalyptic oracle as in the case of *1 En.* 46.4–6a. The eschatological event of the birth of Jesus previously declared as the birth of the υἱὸς ὑψίστου and υἱὸς θεοῦ, the one who will inherit the θρόνον Δαυὶδ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ (1:32, 35), ushers in the era of God’s great reversal for Israel. Luke appears to intend to inspire a dynamic sense of expectancy and hope, that is, hope for the unfolding of the eschatological age in the arrival of Jesus. The events of 1:51–53 are linked to God’s promises to Abraham rather than to a cosmic intervention. The cultural intertexture highlights both the similarities and the differences between the two texts, and

the more national hope expressed in the *Magnificat* suggests the use of prophetic discourse rather than apocalyptic (see § 4.3.2.6 below).

#### **4.3.2.6 Social and cultural texture expressed in prophetic and priestly rhetorolects**

Green (1997, 87) observes that the idea of God's patronage is implied by the assurance that the angel gives to Mary in the narrative of God's presence in her life (1:28, 46–50, 54). As such it manifests social and cultural texture. God grants favour to God's people in the birth of Jesus. In 1:46–49, Mary rejoices in God as her *σωτήρ*, and expresses appreciation for his favourable awareness of her lowly status as a servant of God. She recognizes that *ὁ δυνατός* has done great things for her. The degree of honour being ascribed to Mary in the text is thereby increased as the time for the birth of Jesus approaches. These assurances of God's presence and favour on Mary's life are expressed in the *zone of emotion-fused thought*, as described in § 2.2.4 (see Malina, 2001 [1981], 69). Luke hereby engages his readers rhetorically as empathetic participants in the narrative.

In line with the dominant cultural understanding of God in the ancient Mediterranean world, in the *Magnificat* Mary sees herself as a client of God: God the divine patron has granted her favour, keeping watch over her life (1:48a). This divine patronage is expressed in categories of honour-shame. Verse 50b implies that consistently throughout history, divine mercy and honour have been granted to those who honour God (*τοῖς φοβουμένοις αὐτόν* – literally, to those who fear and respect [God]). In terms of 1:49a, future generations will recognise in these divine blessings, the great things God has done for Mary as client (*ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν μακαριοῦσίν με* – 1:48b).

By contrast, Mary's voice fulfils a prophetic function in the world of the text as she declares God's judgement. Those who dishonour God in their secret pride (1:51b) will be the recipients of a reversal of their social and political favour. Luke 1:52a and 53b proclaim that God has brought down those who are powerful from their thrones, and has sent the rich away empty-handed. The proclamation of God's judgement expressed in these acts of reversal suggests the application of prophetic discourse to describe the consequences for those who have abused power and wealth. Mary's doxology builds conceptually on images inspired by past historical experiences in the life of Israel as a political kingdom under its series of kings, and from the message of God's prophets directed against the kings and the elites of Israel's society. The residents of the kingdom were challenged by the prophets of old (firstspace prophetic conceptualisation). The internal progressive texture of the

rhetology develops these ideas into a vision for an age when God will bring judgement upon those who have acted unjustly. God will restore the nation of Israel. Mary functions as a prophet chosen by God to bring this challenging message (secondspace prophetic conceptualisation). Implied in the rhetoric of the doxology is the hope for a future new reality where the hungry will be filled with good things as recipients of God's justice, and his servant Israel will be helped to reach its full potential (thirdspace prophetic conceptualisation in the space of blending).

Luke thereby employs various *topoi* in Mary's doxology in the context of God's historical actions on the part of Israel as the servant of God (1:46–53): (1) the merciful actions of God in Mary's own life; (2) the merciful actions of God on behalf of people who are poor and disempowered; (3) God's judgement upon those who are proud; and (4) God's judgement upon those who abuse wealth and power. These *topoi* manifest the fulfilment of God's covenantal promises to their *πατέρας*, that is, *τῷ Ἀβραάμ καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ* (Luke 1:54–55). In these ways, the *Magnificat* emphasises a correlation between God's mercy and judgement and God's ultimate purposes for Israel as revealed to Mary. Nolland (1989, 64) holds that Mary's doxology is orientated to the present rather than to the future, expressing a "celebration of eschatological fulfilment". These observations support the argument that Mary's *Magnificat* uses prophetic rhetorolect to honour her promised son Jesus as an eschatological messianic figure, envisaging future events as prophetically fulfilled in his birth.

The elements of prophetic rhetorolect in the *Magnificat* point to the dawning of a new prophetic age in the conception of Jesus. God has "shown strength with his arm" and "scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts" (1:51), bringing down "the powerful from their thrones" (1:52) while helping "his servant Israel" (1:54). This nationalistic emphasis suggests that the powerful ones to be brought down from their thrones are more likely to be national rulers who abuse their powers, rather than the challenge being directed against the forces of the Roman Empire as coloniser of Israel.

The end result of this reversal has been the shaming those who are rich (*πλουτοῦντας*) rich on the one hand, and the lifting up of the humble (*ταπεινούς*) on the other. God has filled the hungry with good things (1:53a). God the divine patron of Israel has always assisted God's people as an expression of ongoing divine mercy towards them (1:54). Jesus the *σωτήρ* is then a broker of the divine patron. His birth is thus to initiate the manifestation of God's favour towards God's faithful people.

In addition to prophetic rhetorolect, there is evidence of priestly rhetorolect. In the earlier portion of this narrative unit, Mary enters the priestly household of Elizabeth who, along with her priest-husband Zechariah, has been declared to be *δίκαιοι* and *ἄμεμπτοι*. Elizabeth is immediately filled with the *πνεύματος ἁγίου* as a result of her proximity to Mary. During the period in which her priest-husband has been struck mute, Elizabeth, the descendant of Aaron, filled with the Holy Spirit, speaks forth a priestly blessing over the life of Mary – a distinctly priestly function (see Num 6:23b–26; Sir 50:20–21). Robbins (2015, 26) summarises the discourse mode as follows: “Priestly kinship, priestly holiness, and priestly blessings establish an environment in which priestly heritage, attributes, and effects blend with the portrayal of Mary and Jesus in the Gospel of Luke.” In his view, the detail in 1:36 regarding Mary being related to Elizabeth the *θυγατέρων Ἀαρών* (1:5), is intended to establish Mary’s priestly kinship. However, Luke at no point makes this point explicit and the relationship rather seems to be specified in order to explain Mary’s visit to Elizabeth during their pregnancies. Nonetheless, priestly rhetorolect does appear to be included in the rhetorical blend.<sup>122</sup>

#### 4.3.2.7 The ascription of honour in the *Magnificat*

In the world of the text, Mary the liberated spokesperson and empowered servant of the Lord plays an important role in Luke’s strategy. The account of her *Magnificat* helps Luke to add to the rhetorical weight of his narrative as he progressively increases the level of honour ascribed to Jesus while the ascription of honour to John progressively decreases in the overall narrative. Mary’s voice speaks with unusual authority in the words of the *Magnificat*, making it uniquely prophetic. She expresses honour and praise to God in this praise poem. As with Zechariah in the words of his *Benedictus*, when Mary visited Elizabeth in her home, Elizabeth took on the role of a priest in the way she blessed Elizabeth (1:42–45). It is doubtful, however, that Luke intends to portray Mary’s voice as priestly in any way. Her role is more prophetic. The close intertexture with 1 Sam 2:1–10 in the Jewish Scriptures makes it extremely likely that her doxology is purposefully modelled on that of Hannah (see Robbins and Potter, 2015, 25). Mary proclaims her praises to God, worshipping him not only in words, but also in her and through her submissive attitude. She honours God and her doxology ascribes honour to the one for whom John prepares the way. This is the one who will ascend to David’s throne, that is, as we have discovered in

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<sup>122</sup> See the helpful analysis of priestly discourse in Luke-Acts undertaken by Robbins (2015b).

1:32–35, her promised son Jesus. Luke seems to use the priestly rhetorolect, blended with the prophetic rhetorolect of the *Magnificat*, to root the eschatological hope of Mary's doxology firmly in the prophetic and priestly traditions of the Jewish Scriptures.

#### **4.3.3 *Inclusio* statement – Mary returns to Nazareth (Luke 1:56).**

Mary's doxology, comprising as it does the middle texture of Narrative unit 3, is followed by the brief section of closing texture that describes her departure from Elizabeth. Departure statements occur frequently in Luke's Gospel, creating repetitive texture (see Luke 1:23, 38b and 56 of Luke 1, and 2:20, 39 and 43). Nolland (1989, 74) is not convinced that they play a structural role but, as has become evident in my analysis of opening-middle-closing texture in Luke's infancy narratives, departure statements frequently mark the close of narrational units. They also contribute to the progressive texture of the infancy narratives as a whole (for example, 1:23, 38b, 56; 2:20). In the case of 1:56, it serves as a brief *inclusio*, which, along with the opening texture of 1:39–45, serves to bracket Mary's *Magnificat*. Mary's doxology is hereby marked off as part of the Jesus infancy narrative, even though, stylistically, it functions as an independent unit. While closing off narrative unit 3, this *inclusio* facilitates a transition to the succeeding narrative unit.

I turn now to an analysis of narrative unit 6.

#### **4.4 JESUS HONOURED BY BEING BORN IN BETHLEHEM (LUKE 2:1–7 [21])**

The overall juxtaposition of the infancy narratives of John and Jesus, as outlined in Figure 4 in chapter 2, draws attention to the demarcation of 2:1–7, comprising narrative unit 6. There is very little evidence of opening-middle-closing texture in narrative unit 6. If anything, the opening texture comprises the greatest portion of the unit, from 2:1–5, beginning with an account of Mary and Joseph's trip to Bethlehem. These verses link the narrative to the account of Mary's return to Nazareth, and set the scene for the account of the actual birth of Jesus. The middle texture can then be regarded as comprising the two verses that recount the birth of Jesus and the rather abrupt explanation in 2:7 that there is no room for the family to be accommodated in the *καταλύματι* (Luke 2:7b). Narrative unit 6 has no adjacent closing texture. However, in terms of the overall structure of Luke 1:5–2:40, the wording of 2:21 is conceptually juxtaposed with the account of John's circumcision and naming in 1:59–64. Luke 2: 21 is thus closely related to 2:6–7 and, conceptually, it forms the closing texture of narrative of the birth of Jesus (see discussion in § 4.5 below).

As has become clear, SRI concerns itself with narrational texture and progressive texture, rhetographical elements that enliven the world of the text for readers, as well as with aspects of intertexture, including historical, social and cultural intertexture. In this regard, SRI has some overlap with the approach of Boxall (2009, 23–36) in his narrative reading of Luke’s nativity scene (see § 2.1). Boxall is also committed to holding more than one real and implied world in tension. His explanation of the boundaries defining his interpretation is a case in point. He holds that it is required of an interpretive approach to take history seriously, for example, in this case, “Roman imperial propaganda about the Augustan age or Bethlehem’s connection with messianic prophecy” (Boxall, 2009, 27). At the same time, an interpretive approach should take narrative seriously, acknowledging its complementary role alongside the historical critical method (Boxall, 2009, 27). SRI would understand the type of narrative-historical approach proposed by Boxall as an expression of dialogical reading. It purposefully investigates inner texture and intertexture, intending to facilitate a conversation between the two perspectives.

Before exploring the way in which Luke develops the rhetology of narrative unit 6 narrating the birth of Jesus, I will explore a manifestation of historical intertexture in the opening texture of 2:1–5.

#### **4.4.1 Opening texture sets the scene (Luke 2:1–5).**

##### **4.4.1.1 Historical intertexture of Luke 2:1–5**

In terms of the historical context referred to in Luke 2:1–5, the following events take place at the time of a decree issued by Emperor Augustus (2:1), often used by Rome as a means of control and subjugation of areas under their rule. Luke hereby sets the scene for the birth of Jesus. The repetitive texture of the mention of the census and its requirements in 2:1–5 points to the significance of these details, as they are stressed in Luke’s narrative (see Green, 1997, 124). At a narrational level, the reference to a decree having gone out from Emperor Augustus *ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις* (2:1) provides a conceptual parallel to Luke’s account of the annunciation of John, which is said to take place *ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις* of King Herod of Judea (2:5). It also manifests a conceptual parallel with Luke 3:1, which locates the launch of John’s public ministry within a complex and detailed historical context:

the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas.

However, history knows nothing of the census referred to in vv. 1–5. Luke may have in mind a local census referred to by Josephus (*A.J.* 18:1–3) as having been initiated by Quirinius in around 6 C.E., the result of the deposition of Herod Archelaus as the native ruler of Judea (see Gruen, 1996).<sup>123</sup> In Luke’s rhetology, he seems intent on locating the event of Jesus’ birth in the historical context of the Rome-dominated period, which would appear to support Brent’s view (1997, 438; see § 4.2.3.4 above) that Luke was attempting to show Theophilus and his community (that is, the implied readers) that the coming of Jesus would achieve the perceived objectives of the *pax deorum*, as described in § 4.2.3.4 above. The historical intertexture also points to a possible emphasis on the historicity of the birth of Jesus on the part of Luke. This view would also explain similar historical intertexture in Luke 2:5 and 3:1.

The reference to the census reminds us of the context of the birth of Jesus as the royal Davidic υἱὸς θεοῦ (1:32–35). Luke seems to be calling the reader’s attention to the context as one of imperial rule under an emperor who has already been declared as σωτήρ, as a result of his success in establishing the *pax deorum* throughout the Roman Empire, bringing “peace and order into the world for the first time in anyone’s memory” (Horsley, 2006, 26). However, Horsley (2006, 25–30) has suggested that the implications of this historical reference run deeper than simply the setting of context. He suggests that the implications of challenge to Caesar Augustus ought to be taken more seriously (Horsley, 2006, 26). Since our understanding of the rhetorical point of this intertexture is so important, in my consideration of the rhetology of Luke 2:1–5 in § 4.4.1.2, I will attempt an evaluation of Horsley’s view in the light of evidence from Luke’s rhetoric.

#### 4.4.1.2 The rhetology of Luke 2:1–5

As the only other canonical gospel including a birth narrative, Matthew’s Gospel may offer some assistance at this point in determining the thrust of Luke’s implied argument. A comparison with Matt 1:18–25 shows that Luke has taken great care to communicate the human aspect of the birth of Jesus. Matthew reveals a fairly developed incarnational theology by reciting from Isa 7:14 in his narrative to show that a παρθένος will conceive and bear a son who will be named Ἐμμανουήλ, which, Matthew tells his readers, means, μεθ’ ἡμῶν ὁ Θεός (Matt 1:22–23). Furthermore, he spells out the fact that Jesus is a descendant of

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<sup>123</sup> Luke would probably have had little access to a course of events that would have taken place some 80 or so years earlier so the historical inaccuracy ought not to be all that surprising.

David, as regards his earthly father, and that his conception is a result of the work of the Holy Spirit in terms of Jesus' salvific ministry (Matt 1:20–21). The comparison highlights Luke's different strategy. Luke's narrative goes to great lengths to emphasise the human circumstances of Jesus' birth by using rhetology to set the scene. He begins by explaining that Joseph and Mary have to travel to Bethlehem, the πόλιν Δαυίδ (Luke 2:4), in order for Joseph to register as a descendant from ἐξ οἴκου καὶ πατριᾶς Δαυίδ (Luke 2:4), hereby using the royal context of Jesus' birth to add to his developing ascription of honour to Jesus as a royal figure.

#### **4.4.2 Use of royal *topoi***

Although Luke appears to do very little with the implication of Jesus being born in Bethlehem, he does mention on two occasions that it is the πόλιν Δαυίδ (Luke 2:4, 11). In this way he subtly develops the rhetology of his narrative, setting the scene for Jesus' birth. The implication is that it is appropriately honourable for Jesus as a royal infant and a descendant of David to be born in Bethlehem, the πόλιν Δαυίδ. Luke 2:1–2 again manifests several royal *topoi*, some of which more directly relate to Jesus within the world of the text, and some that create intertexture with the Graeco-Roman world. These include references to Emperor Augustus himself (2:1), and the emperor's action in calling for a census (2:1–2).

##### **4.4.2.1 Implied apologetic use of the royal *topoi***

As in the case narrative unit 3 in Luke 1:32–35, the rhetoric of the narrative seems intent on addressing issues pertinent to the implied readers, that is, to Theophilus and his community. Earlier in this chapter, in § 4.2.4.2, I referred to an article by Brent (1997) in which he argues that Luke's use of royal *topoi* in the annunciation unit point to a strategy of reconfiguration of dominant cultural and political values and themes of the Graeco-Roman world. The occurrence again here in narrative unit 6 of a series of royal *topoi* suggests that Luke, again motivated by apologetic goals, is honing in on the actual purpose of the imperial cult, namely, the *pax deorum*, as described in § 4.2.3.4 above. He seems here, once again, to be reinforcing the offer of a positive rationale for the desirability of embracing such convictions about Jesus (see discussion in §4.2.3.4 above).

##### **4.4.2.2 The birth of Jesus ushers in a reconfigured *pax deorum*.**

Critical spatial theory suggests possible insights into what is going on conceptually in Luke's rhetoric. The *pax deorum* enjoyed by the Roman Empire in the Mediterranean world possibly supplies the implied firstspace context for Luke's implied Graeco-Roman readers.

As the early Christian discourse, upon which Luke draws, began to develop and take shape, the possibility of an alternative reality under the rule of God Almighty, with Jesus as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, began to emerge. This process may well have provided the conceptual categories that enabled Luke to conceptualise an alternative *pax deorum*, which, by implication, was now on offer in his developing rhetoric as a reconfiguration of values and social categories, appreciated and understood in the Graeco-Roman world. However, in Luke's rhetoric in the infancy narratives, a fully developed thirdspace conceptualisation of a universal heavenly empire is not yet evident. The well-spring of prophetic discourse available to him still seems to dominate his thinking. However, the seeds of apocalyptic rhetorolect appear to be present, available for future reconfiguration in times of perceived persecution and suffering, eventually to lead to the production of genuinely apocalyptic texts, such as the Book of Revelation.

In the annunciation of Jesus, Gabriel has already assigned royal titles to Jesus (υἱὸς ὑψίστου and υἱὸς θεοῦ – 1:32, 35). Joseph's genealogical connection to the family of King David is established in the world of the text to provide for a "royal" birth for Joseph and Mary's son in Bethlehem in terms of his earthly father's ancestry. In Luke 2:4b, Luke recounts Joseph and Mary's arrival in the πόλιν Δαβίδ, that is, Bethlehem, shortly before the birth of Jesus. This detail makes an important contribution to the overall rhetoric and progressive texture of Luke's narrative. Firstly, Jesus is demonstrated to be a rightful heir to the royal Davidic heritage, and secondly, the human conditions of Jesus' birth are emphasised. Jesus is hereby shown to be one born in humble human circumstances, and at the same time, one who is the σωτήρ.

#### 4.4.2.3 Enthymematic argumentative texture

The rhetoric of Luke 2:1–5 is expressed by means of an enthymeme. It involves the royal lineage of Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus, referred to in 2:1–5 and is emphasised in the narrational lengths Luke goes to in order to get Jesus' parents from Nazareth to Bethlehem for his birth. It can be set out as follows:

- **Rule:** The first premise of the argument is not explicitly stated. The argument assumes that the χριστός is expected to be a royal figure.
- **Case:** According to Luke 2:4, Jesus' earthly father Joseph is of royal descent.
- **Result:** Luke implies that Joseph's legal son, Jesus, is thus regarded to be of royal descent.

The enthymeme is based on a weak inductive argument concluding that, as will become evident in the progressive texture, having an earthly father of Davidic descent is consistent with Jesus being the royal *χριστός*. The conclusion is expressed in the progressive texture of Luke's birth and infancy narrative of Jesus: (1) using royal *topoi* in reference to Jesus in the oral-scribal intertexture of Luke 1:32–35; (2) in the words of Zechariah in his *Benedictus*, where he implies a declaration of Jesus as a *κέρας σωτηρίας* for God's people in the house of David (Luke 1:69); (3) in the words of the angels to the shepherds in Luke 2:11 where he is declared to be the *σωτήρ ὃς ἐστὶν χριστὸς κύριος*; and (4) later in Luke 2:26, where the doxology of Simeon in the temple implies that Jesus is the *χριστὸν κυρίου* for whom he has been waiting. The rhetology of Luke 2:1–5 is once again an expression of the “logic of rhetorical reasoning” (Robbins, 2009, 16–17), so important for Luke's infancy narratives. Luke is using these events to build his rhetology as he makes his case in the progressive texture of the infancy narratives.

#### **4.4.2.4 The narrative manifests ideological texture.**

The account of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem also plays an important role in the overall rhetology of Luke's infancy narratives, as a comparison with Matthew's birth narrative highlights. In their respective infancy narratives, Luke and Matthew have different narrational strategies for explaining the presence of Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus. It is of ideological importance for Luke that Jesus is born in Bethlehem. It makes more explicit his claim that Jesus is a Davidic heir – doing so by stressing the Davidic ancestry of his human father, Joseph. Being born in the Davidic family hometown, *legitimates* Luke's claim in respect of Jesus' royal ancestry, strengthening the increasing level of power and honour ascribed to Jesus and further developing his asymmetrical honour-power relationship with John. The text hereby manifests elements of *narrativisation* as part of Luke's strategy to *rationalise* his rhetorical argument, developed in the rhetology of his account of Jesus' birth. In the world of Luke's narrative, the family of Jesus soon return to Nazareth in Galilee (2:39–40), where he grows into adulthood and spends most of his later years in public ministry.

#### **4.4.3 Jesus is born as promised (Luke 2:6–7).**

In the middle texture of narrative unit 6 (Luke 2:6–7), Luke presents his account of the event of the birth of Jesus, which is, in the words of Nolland (1989, 105), “spare to the extreme”. Luke has spent much of the narrative space thus far preparing for what follows. In the process, he implies a theological argument explaining the meaning of these events in

terms of their human and divine implications, as discussed above. He now recounts the actual birth of Jesus, using no more than thirty-six words in total. In the process, he further develops the emphasis on the space-time reality of the birth of Jesus. In spite of Jesus having been proclaimed as υἱὸς ὑψίστου and υἱὸς θεοῦ and that he will be given the θρόνον Δαυὶδ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ in 1:32–35, his birth is marked by the normality of the everyday life of people living in a small Judean town where rural conditions prevail.

In part, Luke achieves this by means of the rhetography of this brief section. He explains in 2:7b that, since no accommodation is available in the κατάλυμα, he ends up being born, by implication, in an animal shelter and laid in a φάτνη. King (2009, 67–69) argues that a κατάλυμα would have been understood by Luke’s readers to have referred to an “inn”, since this would have been consistent with the use of κατάλυμα in the LXX. He argues that this reading is also then likely to have been congruent with a central point of Luke’s narrative of the birth of Jesus, that is, that God is able to overcome human obstacles to facilitate the fulfilment of divine purpose. Nolland (1989, 105) discusses the flexible nature of the noun κατάλυμα. He takes Luke’s text to imply that it was the baby that could not be accommodated in the κατάλυμα, which, he argues, best refers to “the living quarters provided by a single-roomed Palestinian home in which hospitality has been extended to Mary and Joseph” (Nolland, 1989, 105). The narrative then implies that because of the extra new born baby, the family has to be accommodated in an outside shelter, possibly along with the domestic animals that would have been fed from the φάτνη. Luke’s reference to the baby being laid in a φάτνη contributes to the rhetography of the passage by way of its implication of space and context that form part of everyday life in the ancient Mediterranean rural world. The reference hints at the feeding of domestic farm animals, implying that the baby is accommodated in a rough and ready animal shelter, calling to mind images of the sounds and smell of goats, sheep and cattle.

The birth of Jesus, the υἱὸς ὑψίστου . . . υἱὸς θεοῦ (Luke 1:32, 35) in these humble circumstances builds on the progressive texture evident in the narrative, consistent as it is with the development of Luke’s narrative that a son is to be born to a human mother, albeit as a result of divine fatherhood, thus emphasising a unique human counterpoint to Jesus being born as the υἱὸς ὑψίστου and υἱὸς θεοῦ. Luke achieves this emphasis by means of the rhetography of this narrative unit. He is using this rhetography to argue not only for the greatness of Jesus as a royal figure with a special relationship with God, but also for the human circumstances of his birth. The firstspace rhetorical appeal manifesting in this rhetography is consistent with Luke’s use of prophetic rhetorolect to describe the

circumstances and events of the birth of Jesus in the *πόλει Δαυίδ*. In the rhetography and rhetology of this narrative unit, Luke is using firstspace description of the birth of Jesus in these human circumstances, as the birth of “Jesus as Prophet-Messiah selected and sent by God” (Robbins, 2009, 109), a human body destined to be a unique distributor of justice to the people of God.

#### **4.5 JESUS HONOURED BY RITES OF PASSAGE (LUKE 2:21).**

As referred to in §4.4 above, narrative unit 6 presents something of a structural enigma in that it does not include closing texture bringing the account of the birth of Jesus to a close. The logical closing texture to narrative unit 6 is to be found later in Luke 2:21, structurally positioned at the close of narrative unit 7, in Luke’s reference to the circumcision and naming of Jesus. The words of 2:21 contain repetitive texture in that they closely parallel the narrative of John’s circumcision and naming in Luke 1:59–64. The parallels include references to (1) the eighth day marking the appropriate time to circumcise an infant; (2) the naming of the child taking place on the occasion of his circumcision; and (3) the child being named as directed by Gabriel. These parallels reinforce the juxtaposition of the two infancy narratives.

As in the case of the circumcision and naming of John, Luke 2:21 describes the social and religious rites of passage faithfully followed by Jesus’ parents. The reference again evidences important social and cultural intertexture. By describing the circumcision of Jesus as taking place on the eighth day (according to the patriarchal custom), Luke’s narrative establishes Jesus’ impeccable Jewish legal credentials from the time of his infancy (Nolland, 1989, 110). In my analysis of narrative unit 8, I will explore the significance of two additional rites described by Luke in respect of Jesus.<sup>124</sup>

The narrational texture of this account connects these actions to the angel’s instruction in Luke 1:31 regarding the naming of Jesus, thereby reinforcing all the rhetorical force of Luke’s use of prophetic and apocalyptic rhetorolect on that occasion.

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<sup>124</sup> The work of Reeve (2011) is particularly valuable with regard to the rites of passage. In § 3.6, I discuss the social and cultural and the scribal intertexture reflected in Luke’s account of the circumcision of John. Those comments are also relevant here.

#### **4.6 JESUS HONOURED BY AN ANGELOPHANY AND SHEPHERD-VISIT (LUKE 2:8-20)**

Luke's narrative of the birth of Jesus now continues with the seventh narrative unit, which recounts the angelic encounter of shepherds in a field, the angelic doxology, and the tribute paid to the new born infant Jesus by the shepherds. In terms of progressive texture, this narrative unit marks an important escalation in the degree of honour and power attributed to Jesus in the text. The account manifests various elements of oral-scribal intertexture. Again, the narrative unit manifests opening-middle-closing texture.

##### **4.6.1 Shepherds living in the fields (Luke 2:8)**

The opening structure in Luke 2:8 provides an introduction to the account of the experience of shepherds in the fields. The inclusion of this additional material regarding the angelic encounter of the shepherds in narrative unit 7, and the further account of the infant Jesus being presented at the temple in narrative unit 8, have no parallels in the John infancy narrative. This in and of itself points to Jesus being ascribed the greater honour of the two.

Shepherds are described, living in the fields and caring for their flocks where they are visited by an angel of the Lord. Once again, the importance of geographical space and place comes to the fore for Luke in this narrative following the birth of Jesus. This is consistent with Luke's meticulous depiction of space in respect of Zechariah's angelic encounter in the temple, the stark indication that Mary's encounter with Gabriel takes place in her hometown of Nazareth, and that Mary visits Elizabeth at her home in the Judean hill country where she declares her doxological response. The reference in 2:8 again calls to mind images of rural life in the ancient Mediterranean world, thereby enlivening the rhetography of the text. The rhetography sets the scene in the everyday world of shepherds and sheep. Luke in this way roots the supernatural events of the angelic encounter and the important message of the angel of the Lord to shepherds in the everyday rural world of first century Judah facilitates the creation of a vivid and dynamic narrative.

In this way this narrative unit appears to contribute in important ways to the developing progressive texture of the Jesus birth and infancy narrative as a whole. The account of the shepherds experiencing this angelophany out in a field suggests the possibility that this rhetography is being used as part of the rhetology of the progressive texture. The reference appears to be intended as a purposeful echo of Luke 1:52b, which refers to God lifting up the lowly. Rabbinic sources indicate that shepherds held an extremely low social status in

Jewish society.<sup>125</sup> Real shepherds were near the bottom of the social scale in Luke's day because they were landless hired workers. According to Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003, 232), during the first century shepherds were ranked with

ass drivers, tanners, sailors, butchers, camel drivers, and other despised occupations. Being away from home at night, they were unable to protect their women, hence considered dishonourable. In addition, they often were considered thieves because they grazed their flocks on other people's property.

This makes all the more striking their important role in Luke's narrative as recipients of the angelic encounter, validating the events of Luke's birth narrative. Their role in the world of the text appears to be to provide public recognition of Jesus' birth, leading to the ascription of due honour.

In terms of antecedents for Luke's positive portrayal of shepherds, several elements of intertexture are relevant: (1) the metaphor of shepherd is used of God (Ps 23; Ezek 34:15–16); (2) the narratives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob depict these three Israelite ancestors as shepherds (Gen 11–36); (3) Moses is minding his father-in-law Jethro's sheep when he encounters God in the burning bush and is called to shepherd God's people out of Egypt and through the wilderness (Exod 3:1–6 ff.); (4) according to 1 Samuel, as the youngest among his siblings, King David began his working life as a shepherd (1 Sam 17:15); and (5) the impression is given that David learned leadership skills from his experience as a shepherd (see, for example, the insights reflected in Ps 23:1–6). The text implies that, in spite of the low social standing of these shepherds in the world of the author, they play an important role as channels for the ascription of honour to Jesus in the world of the text.

#### **4.6.2 The declaration and praise of angels (Luke 2:9–19)**

The middle texture of narrative unit 7 recounts (1) the prophecy of an angel of the Lord (2:9–12), (2) an angelic doxology in (2:13–14), and (3) an account of the journey of the shepherds to Bethlehem to pay tribute to Jesus (2:15–19). The account of the manifestation

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<sup>125</sup> See Mishnah tractate *Qidduchin* 4.14, in which Rabbi Abba Gurion of Sidon (165–200 C.E.) reflects a negative view toward shepherds. According to him, "A man should not teach his son to be an ass-driver, or a camel-driver or a barber or a sailor, or a herdsman or a shopkeeper, for their craft is the craft of robbers." A negative rabbinic attitude to shepherds is also reflected in folio 25 of the Babylonian Sanhedrin Mishnah tractate which provides a list of professions, listing shepherds after dice-players, pigeon trainers, Sabbatical traders and robbers. They are followed in the list by tax collectors and publicans (Cachia, 1997, 67–78).

of the *δόξα κυρίου* to the shepherds in a field (2:9) provides an important contrast for Luke with the respect he assigns to the temple, and especially to the Holy Place, so central to the opening texture of his narrative in 1:5–23, and to the temple in the closing texture of 2:22–40. In the view of Green (1997, 131), “God’s glory, normally associated with the temple, is now manifest on a farm! . . . At the birth of his son, God has compromised (in a proleptic way) the socio-religious importance of the temple as the culture [sic] center of the world of Israel.” This shift away from temple to the surrounding world goes hand in hand with the angelic proclamation to the shepherds that the coming of Jesus is good news for all the people (2:10), and with the account of Simeon recognition that in Jesus he has witnessed God’s salvation “prepared in the presence of *πάντων τῶν λαῶν, φῶς εἰς ἀποκάλυψιν ἐθνῶν*” (2:31b–32a) discussed in § 4.7.2 below. This universal implication of the ministry of Jesus is an important theme in Luke-Acts, evident, for example, in Christ’s ancestry being traced back to Adam (Luke 3:23–37); positive references to Samaritans (Luke 9:51–55; 10:30–37; 17:11–19); the positive place given to women in Luke’s Gospel (for example, Luke 8:1–3; 10:38–42); and the mission to the Samaritans and Gentiles described in the Book of Acts. God’s glorious actions are not limited to the temple and, as will progressively become clear in Luke-Acts, nor are God’s saving actions limited to the people of God.

The account of the angel of the Lord giving honour to Jesus in his declaration to the shepherds appeals once again to the familiar social and cultural *topos* of honour-shame (see Robbins, 2009, xxix), by means of the application of a royal *topos* to Jesus. In the world of the text, the angel declares Jesus, who was born in the city of David, as *σωτῆρ ὃς ἐστὶν χριστὸς κύριος*, and the angelic host proclaiming their doxology to God, witnessed by the shepherds, communicates the ascription of immense honour to Jesus. The rhetography of the passage appeals to the imagination and facilitates an existential communication that appeals to the senses by tapping into a “constellation of networks of meanings”, thereby appealing to the honour-shame *topos* (Robbins, 2009, xxix). Luke uses just a few words to communicate the awe-filled experience of the shepherds as the angel of the Lord affirms that the birth of Jesus is the birth of the *σωτῆρ ὃς ἐστὶν χριστὸς κύριος*, favoured by divine honour. The appearance of the angel of the Lord along with a host of angels in glory and singing provides rhetography that brings apocalyptic rhetorolect to the fore in this section of Jesus birth and infancy narrative.

#### **4.6.2.1 The rhetology of the text makes several points.**

After describing the appearance of the *ἄγγελος κυρίου* to the shepherds in the field, surrounded by the glory of the Lord, the angel’s declaration begins in 2:10 with the familiar

injunction to the shepherds not to be afraid. The birth of Jesus is declared to be “good news of great joy for all the people” (2:10b). It plays an important function in the progressive texture and rhetology of the passage. The prophetic message of the ἄγγελος κυρίου to the shepherds in 2:9–12, like the words of Gabriel to both Zechariah and Mary in Luke 1, presents an important expression of aspects of the nature, role and office of Jesus. I agree with the understanding of Green (1997, 131) that Luke’s account of the angel’s message intimates the universal implication of the coming of Jesus. The announcement of the angel of the Lord to the shepherds brings together, in summary, various threads of Luke’s proclamation of Jesus as God’s σωτήρ, one who is the royal χριστός κύριος. In this way this narrative unit forms an integral part of the progressive texture and rhetology of the narrative, as Luke strengthens his narrational argument for the nature and identity of Jesus. Luke is emphasising the inclusive and universal nature of the benefits for God’s people that are the direct consequence of the birth of Jesus.

In Luke 2:10b–12, he further develops the rhetology of the text. He stresses the universal nature of the good news of the birth of Jesus. His birth is declared to be a source of great joy to all people. This emphasis on universal good news is balanced by the warning already given in the *Magnificat* in Luke 1:52–53, of the judgement to be effected by his coming for those who abuse their wealth and power.

#### **4.6.2.2 Repetitive texture and echo adds emphasis to Jesus coming as Saviour.**

The statement of the angel of the Lord in Luke 2:11, that Jesus has been ἐτέχθη ὑμῖν σήμερον . . . ἐν πόλει Δαβίδ, echoes earlier statements, thereby contributing to the repetitive texture of the Lukan infancy narratives: (1) in 1:32 the angel promises that God will give to Jesus the θρόνον Δαβίδ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ; (2) Zechariah’s doxology refers to the God of Israel having “raised up for us” a horn of salvation ἐν οἴκῳ Δαβὶδ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ (1:69), by implication a reference to Jesus (see § 3.6.2.3); and (3) according to 2:4, Joseph travelled to the πόλιν Δαβίδ called Bethlehem to register for the emperor’s census because he had descended from the οἴκου καὶ πατριᾶς Δαβίδ. This repetitive texture emphasises Jesus’ royal genealogy by way of his earthly father.

It is perhaps important to note that the primary proclamation of the angel is that a σωτήρ has been born (2:11a). It is this σωτήρ who is described in the same verse as the χριστός κύριος. As χριστός κύριος, Jesus thus comes primarily as the σωτήρ. The stress on Jesus as σωτήρ manifests repetitive texture with earlier elements in the infancy narratives, thereby

highlighting the importance of this point for Luke. In her *Magnificat* (1:47), Mary has referred to God as τῷ σωτήρί μου. In his *Benedictus* (1:69) Zechariah has celebrated the fact that God has raised up a κέρασ σωτηρία. The *Benedictus* repeatedly speaks of God's acts of redemption, rescue and salvation (see also 1:68, 71, 74 and 77). The theme is picked up again in narrative unit 8 in the account of Anna the prophet, who shared the news of Jesus' coming with πᾶσιν τοῖς προσδεχομένοις λύτρωσιν Ἱερουσαλήμ (2:38). Consistent with the predominant use of prophetic discourse in Luke's infancy narratives, Luke again on this occasion uses prophetic rhetorolect to make his point. In Jesus, a σωτήρ has been born ὃς ἐστὶν χριστὸς κύριος. These elements in the text point to a close relationship between God as Mary's σωτήρί, and to Jesus as the new born σωτήρ. The text hereby ascribes honour to Jesus as the redemptive agent of God.

The brief angelic doxology in 2:13–14 also manifests a conceptual echo linking it to the doxologies of Mary (1:46–55) and of Zechariah (1:68–79). As one might expect, all three doxologies begin with declarations of praise to God. Mary says, Μεγαλύνει ἡ ψυχὴ μου τὸν κύριον (1:46b), Zechariah declares, Εὐλόγητός κύριος ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ (1:68a), and the multitude of angels appearing to the shepherds, praise God with the words, δόξα ἐν ὑψίστοις θεῷ (2:14a). The angelic doxology appears to be a "proclamation of the results of the birth of Jesus rather than a hymn of praise directly addressed to God" (Marshall, 1978, 111). This again emphasises the great honour ascribed to Jesus as God's σωτήρ, the one who is χριστὸς κύριος.

The final lines of the middle texture in 2:15–19 recount the journey of the shepherds to Bethlehem in search of Jesus. They pay tribute to Jesus and they make known to Joseph and Mary the things communicated to them concerning him. Those who hear it are amazed, and Mary, in particular is said in 2:19 to ponder (literally, ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτῆς) all the things the shepherds told her. This statement, marking the close of the account of the angels and the shepherds, is repeated by a similar statement later in 2:51b where again Luke reports that Mary treasured all these things ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτῆς, marking the close of the account of the boy Jesus visiting the temple and engaging with the teachers there. The progressive texture has escalated and is communicating that something very special is afoot in the birth and childhood of this infant. Jesus' mother sees and recognises it.

#### 4.6.2.3 Intertexture enhances the use of prophetic rhetorolect.

In terms of intertexture echoed in the repetitive texture of the references to God's salvation, and references to Jesus as *σωτήρ*, the text of Isa 9:1–7 comes into view, providing a conceptual parallel between the two references. The echo achieved by this oral-scribal intertexture strengthens Luke's implicit rhetology, suggesting a development of Luke's narrational case for Jesus's birth being the fulfilment of the hope for God's deliverance of Israel expressed in the Book of Isaiah. The following important points of intertexture can be identified between Isa 9:1–7 and Luke 1–2: Both texts contain references to: (1) Galilee (Isa 9:1b; Luke 2:4), (2) light and darkness (Isa 9:2; Luke 1:78–79), (3) times of rejoicing (Isa 9:3; Luke 2:10, 20), (4) powerful oppressors being brought low (Isa 9:4–5; Luke 1:51 and 71), (5) the birth of a son (Isa 9:6a; Luke 2:7), (6) the ascription of authoritative titles to a referenced figure (Isa 9:6b; Luke 2:7, 11), and (7) the establishment of Davidic rule (Isa 9:7; Luke 1:32–33; 2:11, 14) (see Green, 1997, 134, note 155).

Luke's application of the title *σωτήρ* to Jesus in 2:11 also echoes Mary's celebration of God as her Saviour in the *Magnificat* (1:47). It also manifests oral-scribal intertexture with the texts in the LXX that use the title *σωτήρ* in reference to God delivering and helping people (see 1 Sam 10:19, Isa 45:15, 21; Wis 4:30; 1 Macc 4:30; Sir 51:1). The references to Jesus as *σωτήρ* also draw on a tapestry of cultural intertexture with both Roman and Jewish heritage. In terms of cultural intertexture with the Roman world, the emperor Augustus was known as a saviour.<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, in this regard, Green (1997, 135) has pointed out that the addition of the title *κύριος* in 2:11, echoes the application of the title to the emperor in the Graeco-Roman world. According to Green, this usage had developed from the "more general use of the term in the larger Graeco-Roman world to designate one's benefactor or Patron" (Green, 1997, 135). This may account for the general tone of acceptance reflected towards Rome in Luke, as discussed in § 4.2.3.4 above, rather than the use of *σωτήρ* as a confrontational challenge.

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<sup>126</sup> See my discussion of cultural intertexture between the royal *topoi* employed in Luke 1:32–35 and the use of similar titles in the imperial cult (§ 4.2.3.2). See also the discussion of the Roman and Jewish cultural background to the title Saviour in Bovon (1996, 125–126), and the detailed discussion of the variety of applications of the title *σωτήρ* in Fohrer and Foester (1971), where we see that the title was also assigned to other important figures, including gods, rulers and physicians.

Luke 2:11 marks a crescendo to the progressive texture of the infancy narratives, expressed in the angel's declaration that a σωτήρ has been born ἐν πόλει Δαυίδ, one who who is χριστός κύριος. Luke's specification of the locus of Jesus' role as σωτήρ, χριστός and κύριος as ἐν πόλει Δαυίδ also manifests cultural intertexture with Second Temple Jewish literature that at times expresses the expectations for the coming of a royal redeemer figure. Once again, Luke 2:11 demonstrates interesting similarities with *4 Ezra* in its manifestation of cultural intertexture, drawing attention to the way in which Luke applies prophetic expectations to Jesus in 2:10–12 (and in the related earlier portion of 1:32–35). The oral-scribal intertexture also manifested with 1 Sam 10:19, Isa 45:15, 21; Wis 4:30; 1 Macc 4:30; and Sir 51:1 also suggests that the discourse is predominantly prophetic.

However, other elements of the narrative are distinctly apocalyptic, including the reference to τὸ σημεῖον in 2:12; the appearance of the ἄγγελος κυρίου who addresses the shepherds in 2:9; followed by the additional appearance of πλῆθος στρατιᾶς οὐρανόυ who declare their praises to God in 2:13 and 14. These elements suggest that apocalyptic rhetorolect is also included in the rhetorical blend, even if the narrative unit remains predominantly prophetic in tone.

The reference to the δόξα κυρίου also warrants further consideration. The narrative of the shepherds' angelic encounter is in fact bracketed by references to the δόξα of the Lord and of God in 2:9 and 14. The δόξα κυρίου shines around the shepherds when the angel of the Lord stands before them (2:9), and then God is praised in the angelic doxology of 2:14, using the words, δόξα ἐν ὑψίστοις θεῶ. Marshall (1978, 109) holds that Luke is saying that the angel is accompanied by “the blazing glory which marks the presence of the divine” (see Luke 9:34; Acts 12:7; Ezek 1). The account of the angelic encounter builds the narrative up to the description of “a multitude of the heavenly host” joining the angel of the Lord, praising God and ascribing δόξα to God (1:13–14). These references to δόξα κυρίου introduce additional elements of intertexture into the narrative, connecting Luke's text to δόξα κυρίου as used in the LXX. In the LXX δόξα κυρίου is used to translate כְּבוֹד from the HB, which refers to God's honour, majesty and importance. According to BDB, כְּבוֹד (1906, 458) literally means, God's “weightiness”. Examples include Exod 24:16, 40:35; 1 Kgs 8:10–11; 2 Chr 7:1–3. The point is made even more striking by the observation that the LXX usually translates forms of כְּבוֹד־יְהוָה into forms of δόξα κυρίου, which is the same term used here in Luke 2:9. An exceptional minor variation is to be found in the LXX of Exod 24:16, which renders כְּבוֹד־יְהוָה as ἡ δόξα τοῦ θεοῦ. Although this raises a question regarding the Hebrew wording

behind the LXX translation, it may simply point to conceptual equivalence between θεός and κυρίος in the minds of the LXX translators in contexts such as these. The LXX renders כְּבוֹד אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (HB – BHS) as δόξα κυρίου θεοῦ Ἰσραήλ. This again testifies to the close connection between θεος and κυρίος in the minds of the LXX translators. The description of the δόξα κυρίου shining around them (2:9) again echoes the oral-scribal intertexture expressed in the angel’s recitation of the phrase δόξα κυρίου, so often used in the LXX.<sup>127</sup>

#### 4.6.2.4 Intertexture and rhetoric intensify the description.

In addition to the elements of cultural intertexture with the Graeco-Roman context involving the practices and influence of the imperial cult, there are also manifestations of cultural intertexture with texts from the two main historical periods of the community at Qumran, which also provide examples of the use of the title *messiah*. Examples from the earlier period of Qumran include the phrase עַד בּוֹא נְבִיא וּמְשִׁיחֵי אֶהְרֹן וְיִשְׂרָאֵל from 1QS 9.11.<sup>128</sup> These words refer to an expectation for both a priestly and a royal messiah. In addition to the reference to the two messiahs, the Qumran text goes on to refer to the coming of a prophet. The nature of the *Rule of the Community* (1QS) reference suggests that, at least during the earlier phase of the history of the Qumran community, the concept of *messiah* had not yet been fully developed. Neither the extant text of the *Community Rule*, (fragment e) nor the reconstructed versions proposed by Puech (1992, 107, 109) and by Fitzmyer (1993, 157), include a direct reference to *messiah*. The reference to the two messiahs and the prophet is omitted entirely from fragment e of the *Community Rule*, a fragment closely associated with 1QS. Charlesworth (1998, 124–127) suggests that the fragment represents an earlier stage in the redaction of 1QS from a time when messianic ideas were not yet prominent at Qumran. The reference to two messiahs in 1QS also relates the text closely to parts of the *Damascus Document*, namely, CD 12.23; 14.19; 19.10–11;

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<sup>127</sup> By way of example, the LXX renders the description of Moses’ shining appearance after descending from the mountain with the two tablets (קָרַן עוֹר פָּנָיו – literally “the skin of his face sent out rays” – in Exod 34:29), as δεδόξασται ἡ ὄψις τοῦ χρώματος τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ. See the various forms of this description in Exod 34:29–35.

<sup>128</sup> This text is regarded by Charlesworth (1998, 123) as the “celebrated *locus classicus* on Qumran Messianism”. The PTSDSSP translates it as follows: “until the coming of the prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel” (Charlesworth, 1994, 41).

20.1, which also refer to messiahs of Aaron while making no mention of any accompanying prophet.<sup>129</sup>

These elements of cultural intertexture emphasise the fact that, in his account of the birth of Jesus, Luke is proclaiming that the birth of Jesus has marked the fulfilment of a Jewish hope for the coming of an idealised Davidic redeemer.<sup>130</sup> In addition to Jesus being referred to as *χριστός* by the angel of the Lord, he now also applies the title *κύριος* to him. Luke's use of this title in respect of Jesus in this way expresses both Jewish and Graeco-Roman cultural intertexture.<sup>131</sup>

The declaration of the angel of the Lord in Luke 2:11, recognising Jesus as *σωτήρ ὃς ἐστὶν χριστὸς κύριος*, increases the intensity in the ascription of honour to Jesus in respect of his role and person in the progressive texture of these narratives. Furthermore, Luke also uses oral-scribal intertexture between *δόξα κυρίου* in Luke 2:9 and LXX texts that reference the glory of God, that becomes a forceful contributor to the rhetology of Luke's narrative. The vividness of Luke's description of the shining presence of God's glory (rhetography) intensifies Luke's description of these events and adds to the case being developed in the progressive texture of Luke's narrative, arguing narrationally for the sacredness of these events. He hereby adds incrementally to the degree of honour ascribed to Jesus as the new born Messiah in this narrative unit.

In terms of further possible intertexture, the text calls to mind the glory of God that was manifest when God gave the tablets of the Law to Moses at Sinai (Exod 24:16). On another occasion, the glory of God filled the house of the Lord as described in 2 Chr 7:1–3.<sup>132</sup> So too,

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<sup>129</sup> See discussion of the various views on the possible redaction history of the text of 1QS in Xeravits (2002, 20–22), who discusses in detail the possible implications of the absence of 1QS viii 15b–ix 11 in 4Q259.

<sup>130</sup> At Qumran, this hope is expressed in various forms in the messianic exegesis of texts such as 2 Sam 7:10b–14 and Pss 1–2 in *Florilegium*; Dan 7:7–14 in 4Q246 and 1QM 19; Isa 11:1–5 in the *Psalms of Solomon*, the *Isaiah Peshar* (fragment a), 4Q285 and *Blessings*; and Num 24:15–17 in *Testimonia*.

<sup>131</sup> See § 4.2.4.2 for a discussion of aspects of cultural intertexture with the diversified worlds of Second Temple Judaism and Graeco-Roman society.

<sup>132</sup> See Marshall (1978, 109) for a discussion of the various LXX texts that make reference to God's *δόξα* (Exod 16:10; 24:16; 40:34f; Ezek 1:28; 3:12,23). He holds that *δόξα*, used in this way in the sense of blazing glory, is very different from the classical sense of "opinion".

in this text, the tangible presence of the glory of God marks his birth as the arrival of God's *χριστός* on earth, which Luke's narrative portends to be the manifestation of God's salvation expressed in the arrival of Jesus, his *χριστός*. This is an event of divine intervention and revelation, connected by means of intertexture to events such as the giving of the Torah. In these days, from Luke's viewpoint, God's transcendence has become immanent in the person of Jesus. It is clear that great honour is ascribed to the new born infant Jesus whose birth is being announced.

Horsley (2006, 25) points out that, whereas the titles *σωτήρ*, *χριστός* and *κύριος* (2:11) are representative of typical kerygmatic titles applied to Jesus by early Palestinian Jewish Christians, the application of the title *σωτήρ* to Jesus is the only example of the title being used of Jesus in the synoptic gospels. In his view, in Luke 2:1–7 and 2:8–21, by implication, Luke juxtaposes two ideas: (1) the reference to Emperor Augustus in 2:1–2, and (2) the declaration of the angel to the shepherds that Jesus is the *σωτήρ* (2:11). He sees this narrative structure and the historical context as a rhetorically configured challenge to the imperial cult (2006, 25–26). In §§ 4.2.3.1–4.2.3.2, I note the possibility of Luke's application of royal *topoi* to Jesus as a challenge to Rome, and the motivation for this view. In § 4.2.3.3, I evaluate the approach and conclude that “the approach does not adequately account for the complexity of the infancy narratives and the apparent enigma in the implied cooperation with Rome, versus the implied critique of Rome.” I would hold that the same holds here for Luke's reference to the ascription of honorific royal titles to Jesus in 2:11 and for the juxtaposed reference to the census in 2:1–2.

#### **4.6.3 The shepherds' return emphasises the repetitive texture of worship (Luke 2:20).**

Narrative unit 7 ends in 2:20 with an account of the shepherds returning to their fields and sheep, full of glory and praising God for “all they had heard and seen”. This verse constitutes the closing texture of narrative unit 7, the account of the shepherds and the angels honouring the new born Jesus. The use of the verb *δοξάζοντες* manifests repetitive texture, also occurring in 2:9, 14 and 32, thereby emphasising Luke's description of the wonder of the glorious event. In a similar semantic field, and enhancing the repetitive texture, the verb *αἰνοῦντες* in 2:20 connects the actions of the departing shepherds to those of the angels in 2:13. It also connects this element of doxology in unit 7 to the other doxologies of Luke's account (1:46b, 68a and 2:13). This adds to the general sense that the birth of Jesus is marked by doxology. As Marshall (1978, 114) aptly puts it, “The motif of praise fittingly closes several pericopes in Lk. Especially 24:53.”

#### 4.7 JESUS HONOURED BY BEING PRESENTED AT THE TEMPLE (LUKE 2:22–40)

According to narrative unit 8, the “righteous and devout” Simeon, and Anna the prophet, recognise Jesus as God’s eschatological agent of salvation for Jews and Gentiles. In the world of the narrative, Luke shows that such prophetic and pious servants of God are not dead spiritual leaders from the ancient world of Jewish Scripture, but rather flesh and blood contemporaries of Jesus who have been waiting for God to send the *χριστός*. They are shown to recognise in Jesus the dawning of God’s day of redemption for Israel and, in Simeon’s case, also the Gentiles. In this narrative unit, Luke demonstrates that the manifestation of Jesus in the sacred temple announces that God’s saving action is coming to pass. These events in the temple are endowed with the supernatural presence of God and the narrative of Jesus’ infancy is rooted in the authority of the Jewish Scriptures and traditions. As the one bringing God’s salvation to humanity, Jesus is God’s *χριστός*.

##### 4.7.1 Opening texture: Rites of passage for Jesus (Luke 2:22–24)

Verses 22–23 form the opening texture of narrative unit 8. Following the birth, circumcision and naming of Jesus, “When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord” (1:22). As pointed out in § 3.5.1, the events of Narrative unit 8 describe two additional rites of passage in respect of Jesus that do not feature in John’s infancy narrative: (1) the presentation of the infant Jesus at the temple (Luke 2:22–23), and (2) the sacrifice of either two turtle doves or two young pigeons being offered on behalf of Jesus.

Luke’s description of the family’s pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem and its justification is somewhat confusing in terms of intertexture with the Jewish Scriptures. The reference to the law of Moses requiring purification (2:22) implies intertexture with Lev 12:1–8, which prescribes a seven-day period of ceremonial uncleanness on the part of a mother after bearing a male child, followed by a thirty-day period of purification. Upon completion of the period of purification, the mother is required to bring an offering to a priest. It is unclear why Luke has included Jesus and his father in reference to this requirement. This action in the *zone of purposeful action* is explained, ostensibly by way of an oral-scribal recitation from the Jewish Scriptures: “as it is written in the law of the Lord, ‘Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord.’” The words are loosely recited from Exod 13:2, 12, 15. By using this reference, Luke has introduced a different motif into the account: the setting apart and redemption of the firstborn male child, which, since the precept predated

the Jerusalem Temple, did not require such a visit.<sup>133</sup> A further possible conceptual strand of intertexture relates the explanation to the account given in Neh 10:35–36 (“bring to the house of our God, to the priests who minister in the house of our God, the firstborn of our sons and of our livestock, as it is written in the law. . .”). The Nehemiah reference suggests that this practice may later have come to be understood as the implied requirement of what was written in the law, especially the aspect of setting apart the firstborn son. To confuse matters further, Marshall (1978, 116) suggests that it is also possible that Luke had in mind the offering of a child for divine service, as in the case of Samuel (1 Sam 1:11, 22, 28). There are thus several possible strands of intertexture.

In 2:24, Luke returns to the first motif concerning postnatal purification in respect of Mary. He states that “they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, ‘a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.’” In 1:24, the text of Lev 12 is clearly in view, which requires a sacrificial offering to be brought to the tent of meeting as a purification rite in respect of the mother of a new born son. The acceptable offering is “a lamb in its first year for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering” (Lev 12:6). Although Luke does not emphasise the fact, he implies that, by bringing “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons”, Mary and Joseph make use of the concession available to those who cannot afford to bring a lamb (Lev 12:8; Luke 2:24).

Some might argue that by blending various traditions from Leviticus, Exodus and possibly Nehemiah, and possibly a tradition from 1 Samuel, Luke is simply giving evidence of a personal lack of understanding of Jewish cultural and religious practices. However, Marshall (1978, 116) suggests that it is more likely that “Luke has run together the cleansing of the mother and the offering of the child into one act”, that is, with rhetorical intent. Luke is at pains to show that everything required by the law was done for Jesus at the outset of his life. He does so to demonstrate that, from the outset, Jesus lived a just and righteous life with honour. In terms of the internal intertexture and repetitive texture of Luke 1 and 2, this emphasis provides an echo of the earlier promise of the angel that “the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God” (1:35).

The prominence of the Jerusalem Temple as the setting for this final narrative unit echoes the opening narrative unit that introduced John’s parents and Zechariah’s temple angelophany, thereby creating a framing pair of temple references. The presentation at the

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<sup>133</sup> See Num 3:44–51 for the origin of the idea of paying a redemption price.

temple and the prominent emphasis on temple rites again suggests the employment of priestly rhetorolect, a mode of discourse that has not featured since narrative unit 1. This again suggests narrational framing. Luke appears to be making a purposeful firstspace reference to the experience of temple worship in the life of Israel. The use of priestly rhetorolect could imply an invitation for readers to visualise these the events described in this narrative unit as taking place in the place in the geophysical firstspace where selected human priests serve JHWH on behalf of the people of God as members of the pure priestly community (secondspace conceptualisation), with the vision and intention that God's people should benefit from receiving holiness and purity from God (thirdspace conceptualisation) (see Robbins, 2009, 109).

By employing a temple *topos* along with priestly rhetorolect in this way, Luke achieves a rhetorical emphasis on the fact that the events around the birth of Jesus as σωτήρ ὃς ἐστὶν χριστὸς κύριος are rooted in the cultural and religious heritage of Israel. This rooting of the narrative in the past lends rhetorical emphasis to the honour and power ascribed to Jesus within the context of Jewish culture, as the one whose birth marks the dawning of a new age for Israel.

#### **4.7.2 Middle texture: Prophetic declarations by pious and righteous Jews (Luke 2:25–38)**

The middle texture of narrative unit 8 begins with the narrator's voice introducing Simeon, a resident of Jerusalem. Simeon is described as "righteous and devout" and he is said to await "the consolation of Israel" (2:25). His piety is reasserted in the observation that the "Holy Spirit rested on him" (2:25), suggesting the presence of sacred texture. Simeon had received a revelation from the Holy Spirit that he "would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah" (2:26).

Simeon conveniently arrives at the temple at the exact moment of the arrival of Jesus' parents (2:27). He then takes the infant Jesus in his arms (2:28), echoing the instructions of Neh 10:35–36. Although Luke's description of Simeon in no way suggests that he is a priest, the fact that these events take place in the temple in this way do still point to a purposeful firstspace reference to the experience of temple worship in the life of Israel. This suggests that the return to priestly rhetorolect identified in the opening texture of this narrative unit now carries over into its middle texture. Rhetorically, the use of priestly rhetorolect in the opening and closing textures of the infancy narratives as a whole suggests that Luke is purposefully anchoring his narrative in the faith traditions of ancient Israel. Furthermore, it

also suggests that Luke may see a continuation of the ancient Israelite temple practices and values in reconfigured form and shape in the birth, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

#### 4.7.2.1 Simeon's declaration manifest prophetic rhetorolect.

The emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in this narrative unit (2:25, 26 and 27) creates repetitive texture with previous references to the Spirit, again suggesting the presence of prophetic rhetorolect, as in the John birth narrative (1:8–23, 67) and earlier in the Jesus birth and infancy narrative (1:35, 41). Prophetic rhetorolect is also suggested by the prophetic insight granted to Simeon by the Holy Spirit concerning the coming of the *χριστὸν κυρίου*, and in the voice of Simeon speaking a prophetic blessing over the infant Jesus in the *zone of self-expressive speech* (2:29–32). Simeon's blessing takes on poetic form (Marshall, 1978) and reinforces a number of themes that have featured previously in the infancy narratives. As a result of the fulfilment in the birth of Jesus of the Holy Spirit's promise to Simeon regarding the coming of the *χριστὸν κυρίου*, Simeon is now being dismissed in *εἰρήνῃ* (2:29). In Jesus he has witnessed God's *σωτήριον* (2:30). This point echoes the knowledge of *σωτηρίας*, which, according to the *Benedictus*, will be made known by John (1:77), the way of *εἰρήνης* into which John will "guide our feet" (1:79). Such *εἰρήνῃ* has been declared by the angelic host to result from the birth of the *σωτὴρ ὃς ἐστὶν χριστὸς κύριος* (2:11, 14).

These repeated themes reinforce the implied message of the royal *topoi* used in Jesus' proclamation, which Brent (1997, 413–414) interprets as a proclamation of prophetic eschatology. As we have seen from my discussion in § 4.2.3.4, in Brent's view, the proclamation is aimed at encouraging Theophilus and his community to follow Jesus as the true means of producing the *pax dei* of the Roman Empire. The promised outcome here in 2:32, of "a light for revelation to the Gentiles" confirms Luke's reconfiguration and *universalisation* of Jesus' royal messianic role. It appears that in some way a Gentile (Christian) audience is in view, while at the same time, in the added assurance, "and for glory to your people Israel", Luke reinforces the nationalistic Israelite elements emphasised in the prophetic rhetorolect. This is the first time Luke overtly talks about the universal impact of the birth of Jesus (2:32). It implies the suggestion that Jesus will transcend Jewish boundaries, bringing salvation to all people. This is an extremely important theme; it eventually becomes the central message of part two of his gospel story in the Book of Acts. This aspect thus prepares the way for the later development of apocalyptic rhetology in the Book of Revelation, which goes on to use some of these titles and themes apocalyptically.

Written in the *zone of emotion-charged thought*, the middle texture goes on to describe Jesus' parents as being amazed at what they have heard concerning their son. Simeon blesses Jesus' parents and continues to prophesy about the future destiny of Jesus. Using prophetic rhetoric, Simeon says that Jesus' life and work are destined to lead to "the falling and the rising of many in Israel" (2:34b). He will be a "sign that will be opposed" and, as a result, "the inner thoughts of many will be revealed" (2:34). This reference to the inner thoughts of many serves as a narrational marker (confirming my observation in § 3.2.1.3 that Luke's narrative speaks frequently of the inner thoughts and emotions of his characters). The prophetic voice of Simeon issues a warning to Mary that "a sword will pierce [her] own soul too," (2:35), suggesting a veiled reference to the crucifixion of Jesus, an event that is central to the climax of Luke's Gospel, and the message proclaimed in Acts.

#### **4.7.2.2 The voices of Simeon and Anna manifest an honour-shame motif.**

If I am correct in observing a veiled reference in this account to the crucifixion of Jesus, which in the ancient world would have marked Jesus out as dishonourable, Luke may rhetorically be comparing the honour ascribed to Jesus by Simeon, a righteous and devout man visiting the temple, to the future dishonour he is destined to acquire as a result of the crucifixion. This ascription of honour to Jesus in the temple by Simeon as he acknowledges Jesus to be the *χριστὸν κυρίου*, marks the climax to a series of narrated events in the progressive texture of the infancy narratives.

The middle texture goes on then to describe the family's encounter with Anna the prophet. As a widow, Anna would have been regarded as a person of low social honour. Rhetorically, the narrative compensates for this by ascribing honour to her in other ways: She is described as a person of great age. She is connected ancestrally to the social and cultural history of Israel as the daughter of Phanuel, a member of the Israelite tribe of Asher (one of the lost ten tribes of Israel). She is described as pious. ("She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day" – 2:36). The narrative implies that she approaches the small gathering just as Simeon prophesies over the lives of Jesus and his parents. She too bursts into doxology in response to encountering the infant Jesus and prophetically speaks "about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (2:38b). This implies an allusion to the eschatological visitation of God (see Green, 1995, 9). The reference to Anna, a prophet who frequented the temple confines, suggests conceptual parallels with the description of the other voices of the infancy

narratives associated with the temple, that is, Zechariah and Elizabeth (1:5–25, 39–45, 57–80) and Simeon (2:25–35).

According to Green (1995, 59), the text suggests that Simeon and Anna, in their respective hopes for “the consolation of Israel” [Luke 2:25] and “redemption of Jerusalem” [Luke 2:38], “must also have in mind the cessation of foreign occupancy and subjection, the renewal of Israel as a nation under Yahweh (and not under Caesar).” However, although the application of royal *topoi* to Jesus on the face of it implies a challenge to the Roman imperial system, as we have seen, in general the rhetoric of the infancy narratives does not support an argument for a full-scale critique of Rome. As I have previously pointed out, Luke has rhetorically sought to make the message of Jesus acceptable and relevant for readers in the Graeco-Roman world (see § 4.2.3.4). This, along with the implied social location of the characters (see §§ 3.1.2.1; 4.1.2) and the respectful attitude to Roman authority of the implied author identified by Robbins (1991b, 331), suggests rather that the *consolation* and *redemption* of Israel and Jerusalem referred to by Simeon and Anna are to be located in Jesus’ prophetic and redemptive role as the σωτήρ ὃς ἐστὶν χριστὸς κύριος for Israel. In spite of the tendency to *universalise* the relevance of Jesus, and the tendency to include others in the Graeco-Roman world as potential beneficiaries of God’s salvation and peace, God’s people are the main recipients of divine justice. The dominant use of prophetic rather than apocalyptic rhetoric suggests that the reference to consolation and redemption best be interpreted prophetically rather than apocalyptically.

#### **4.7.2.3 The honour-shame motif brings the ideological texture to a climax.**

Throughout the infancy narratives, honour is increasingly ascribed to Jesus: (1) it is first evident in the angel speaking to Mary of his future royal role (1:32–35); (2) it is again evident in Elizabeth honouring Mary as the μήτηρ τοῦ κυρίου μου (1:43); (3) it is encountered in Zechariah’s honouring of Jesus as κέρας σωτηρίας ἡμῶν ἐν οἴκῳ Δαυὶδ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ (1:69); (4) it is evident in the angel’s appearance to the shepherds when he honours Jesus as σωτήρ ὃς ἐστὶν χριστὸς κύριος (2:11); and finally (5) we see it here in narrative unit 4 as honour is ascribed to Jesus in the prophetic recognition of his nature and purpose by Simeon and Anna in the temple.

Here in narrative unit 8, the reader encounters the climax to the progressive ascription of honour to Jesus, occurring as it does in the sacred space of the temple. In this account, the unfolding ideological texture reaches its peak. Forming the closing texture of the infancy

narratives as a whole (see § 2.3), the ideological texture in narrative unit 8 is now fully developed. In the juxtaposing and interweaving of the John and Jesus infancy narratives, the asymmetrical honour-power relationship between them has been developed to the point where Jesus has been established as the one who is the more greatly honoured of the two and, therefore, empowered with the greater social authority. In the infancy narratives, Luke has possibly addressed the hypothesised concerns regarding possible conflict between disciples of John and Jesus (see § 3.7.3.3) as he prepares the way for the explicit declaration of John's subordination to Jesus in the account of John baptising Jesus, and in the Q material. The ideological texture of the infancy narratives has set Jesus up as God's σωτήρ ὃς ἐστὶν χριστὸς κύριος, preparing the way for Luke's theological development in the narrational rhetography and rhetology of the rest of his gospel. The gospel narrative climaxes eventually in the account of Jesus' crucifixion, burial, resurrection and ascension and, following that, the spread of the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus as the χριστός recounted in the Book of Acts.

#### **4.7.3 Closing texture: An *inclusio* statement (Luke 2:39–40)**

Narrative unit 8 closes with an *inclusio* in 2:39–40 that brings the Jesus birth and infancy narrative to a close. It is strikingly similar to the wording of the *inclusio* in 1:80 that brings the narrative of John's birth to a close. According to the narrator, once the requirements of the law had been met, the family return to Nazareth in Galilee, the town where Mary had received her annunciation. According to Luke in 2:40, Jesus grows into maturity in every sphere of human life over the course of the next twelve years.

### **4.8 HONOUR-POWER RELATIONSHIPS CREATE IDEOLOGICAL TEXTURE.**

#### **4.8.1 Jesus the prophetic Messiah**

The above observations raise questions as to the rhetorical function of Luke's infancy narratives in the overall structure of Luke's Gospel, and the relationship of the rest of Luke's Gospel to the ideological texture of Luke's infancy narratives. In his study on Luke's Christology, Robert O'Toole (2004, 29–54) argues that Luke's portrayal of Jesus as prophet constitutes an important element in Luke's Gospel as a whole, and this would seem to confirm the observed dominance of prophetic rhetorolect in the infancy narratives.

He points to four key aspects in the narrative in this regard: (1) the programmatic passages of Luke 4:14–44 and 7:18–23; (2) passages that liken Jesus to other prophets (see the parallels between Jesus' actions and those of Elijah in Luke 4:25–26; 7:11–17, 22 // 1 Kgs

17:1–18:1; the parallels between Jesus’ actions and those of Elisha in Luke 4:22–27; 5:12–16; 17:10–19 // 2 Kgs 5:1–9); (3) passages that liken Jesus to Moses (see Luke 4:1–2, 14 // Num 11:16–17, 25; Luke 9:10–17 and Moses and the provision of manna in the wilderness; the transfiguration of Jesus in Luke 9 and Moses’ experience on Mount Sinai in Ex 24:1–35); and (4) passages in which others identify Jesus as a prophet (see Luke 7:16; 9:7–8, 18–19; Acts 3:22–23). In terms of oral-scribal intertexture, Luke’s account of the inauguration of the ministry of Jesus in Luke 4:18–30 is based on the rationale of Isa 61:1–2. It also includes a recitation from the LXX rendition of Isa 58:6. These citations from Isaiah are used to declare that, empowered by the Spirit of the Lord, Jesus’ prophetic ministry is to include preaching the good news, proclaiming freedom and liberty, and healing the sick. Any possible historical intertexture reflected in Luke’s text in respect of both Jesus’ prophetic and messianic ministry may then also explain, at a historical level, the questions allegedly raised by John’s disciples when addressing Jesus during John’s imprisonment, as discussed in § 3.3.6.2.<sup>134</sup>

Reading Luke from the perspective that holds the Book of Acts to be the continuation of Luke’s Gospel story raises further possible explanations for Luke’s various portrayals of Jesus as both Messiah and Prophet (see Cadbury, 1927; Tannehill, 1986; Borgman, 2006; and for a contrary view see Parsons and Pervo, 1993). Treating the two books as a literary unit suggests that Luke was employing a literary device of “expectancy” in the progressive texture of his account, creating a sense of expectation in the minds of readers with the intention of later fulfilling the expectation in the climactic revelation of Jesus’ death as the *χριστός*.<sup>135</sup> Green (1994, 62), refers to the ways in which “a narrative beginning opens up possibilities, generates probabilities, and otherwise invites its audience to a full hearing in order to discover its outcome.” In the view of Green (1994, 62), “Luke accomplishes this not

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<sup>134</sup> In the account of John’s disciples approaching Jesus with on behalf of John, and his reply (7:18–23), Luke is expanding on Q material also paralleled in Matt 11:2–6.

<sup>135</sup> See the study of Zwiep (1997) on the ascension of the Messiah in Lukan Christology. He observes that Luke uses a literary device of circularity to draw a connection between the birth and infancy narrative of Luke 1–2 and the resurrection narrative of Luke 24. Furthermore, he suggests that Luke uses the device of incompleteness to leave the promise of Israel’s salvation unfulfilled (Zwiep, 1997, 29–30).

so much by holding back what will happen; . . . [but rather,] the reader is left to wonder how these far-reaching visions of redemption will come to fruition.”<sup>136</sup>

Dahl (1991, 27–47) has argued that it makes historical sense to understand the rapid uptake of the concept of the messiahship of Jesus to be a direct outcome of his death as King of the Jews, and of his subsequent resurrection. In his account of Jesus’ crucifixion and subsequent resurrection, Luke appears to be repeating an initial emphasis in his birth and infancy narrative that the birth of Jesus is the birth of God’s royal *χριστός*. In Luke’s Gospel, the implications of Jesus being declared at his conception to be the royal *υἰὸς ὑψίστου* and *υἰὸς θεοῦ* are spelled out. The angel who visits the shepherds, and Simeon in the temple, recognise him as the *χριστός*, and he eventually dies and is raised from the dead as King of the Jews, that is, as the *χριστός*. The birth of Jesus as *χριστός*, and the death and resurrection of Jesus as King of the Jews, provide a messianic framing for the overall storyline of the Gospel of Luke that emphasises his royal nature. Luke thus foreshadows in his infancy narratives the case made by the metanarrative of his whole gospel, that is, that Jesus’ own prophetic ministry will eventually lead to his crucifixion as *χριστός*.

#### **4.8.2 Asymmetrical power relationship between John and Jesus**

Reading the opening chapters of Luke’s Gospel with the insights of Wanamaker, Thompson and Eagleton in mind (see § 2.2.8), one is soon alerted to hints that Luke has purposefully juxtaposed and woven together the two infancy narratives in order to facilitate the emergence of an asymmetrical honour-power relationship between John and Jesus, which is revealed in the progressive texture of the infancy narratives and which invites further consideration of possible ideological texture.

##### **4.8.2.1 Progressive texture proclaims John’s subordination to Jesus.**

Luke uses the overall structure of his infancy narratives and its progressive texture to build and strengthen his rhetorology in respect of the ideological texture of these narratives. He uses progressive texture to move the storyline towards a narrational climax that makes Luke’s major theological point: Jesus is the *χριστὸν κυρίου* (2:26).

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<sup>136</sup> Brawley (1990, 34–57), discusses the various narrative foreshadowing, devices used by Luke to create expectation and suspense in Luke-Acts.

Luke has adopted the idea of the subordination of John to Jesus from Mark's Gospel as a primary source. Already in Mark 1:2–3, the author adapts and applies to the role of John, references from Isa 40:3 and Mal 3:1: "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that Mark understands John's role to be that of one who prepares the way for the coming of Jesus. In 1:10–11, Mark seals the subordination of John to Jesus in his description of Jesus emerging from the water after submitting himself to John's baptism. He describes the Spirit's descent on Jesus in the likeness of a dove (1:10), as the heavens open and a heavenly voice declares: *σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα* (1:11). Luke takes on board for his own purposes in his gospel, Mark's reconfiguration of prophetic traditions from the Jewish Scriptures. In turn, Luke then also interprets Jesus as the Lord for whom John prepares the way. The points are progressively clarified in the progressive texture of Luke's juxtaposed and interwoven infancy narratives.

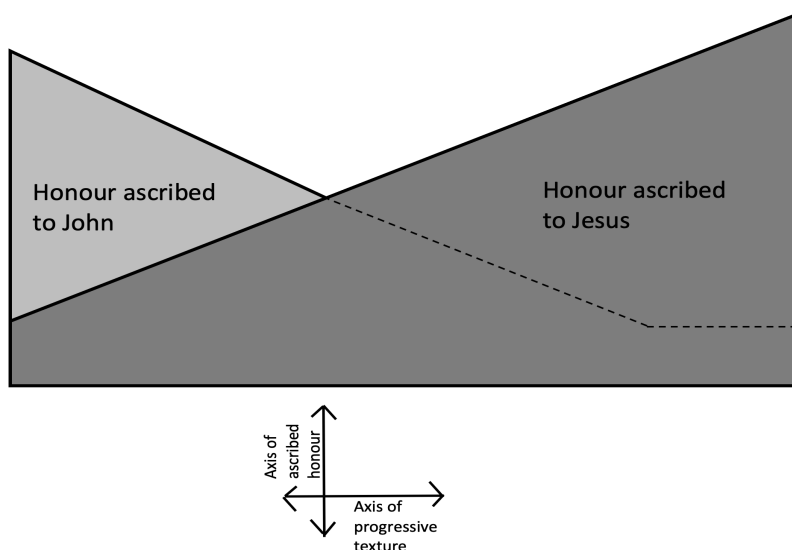
Although not initially clear, it is this progressive texture of Luke's narrative that gradually clarifies Luke's narrational subordination of John to Jesus. The progressive unfolding of Luke's rhetology explains retrospectively the presence of earlier elements in Luke's narrative that do not subordinate John to Jesus: (1) Gabriel announces John's birth to Zechariah his father rather than to Elizabeth his mother, but announces Jesus' birth to Mary his un-wed, and low-honour mother rather than to his father Joseph (1:11–20; 1:26–38 – see § 4.2.2.2). (2) The birth of John is announced in the temple as the historical centre of Israel's religious life, while Jesus' birth is announced in a backwater Galilean village (1:8–11; 1:26 – see § 4.2.2.2). On the face of it, both of these aspects appear to argue against the prioritisation of Jesus over John. They assign honour to John, emphasising his importance in salvation history. However, as important as John may be for Luke, the progressive texture of the infancy narratives, read as a whole, eventually makes it clear that John is subordinate to Jesus. The first indication of this subordination motif in the infancy narratives is the unborn infant John leaping in his mother's womb when the pregnant mother of Jesus enters her home (1:41).

Speaking forth in the role of prophet, Elizabeth, by implication, refers to Jesus as her Lord when she addresses Mary as *ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ κυρίου μου* (1:42). Luke develops his material unit-by-unit in the progressive texture of his infancy narratives as he gradually builds his narrative towards the rhetorical goal of his rhetology. This goal is eventually realised in the recognition of Jesus as the *χριστός* in Luke 2:11 and his confirmation as the *χριστὸν κυρίου* in

2:26. As pointed out by Kuhn (2001, 43),

the seeming contradiction that this implication creates (how can John be directly said to prepare the way of the Lord God, while it is clearly implied by the narrative that it is Jesus for whom John prepares?) invites Luke's audience to consider that Yahweh's awaited advent and Jesus' coming are somehow one and the same.

In the opening lines of Zechariah's doxology, he refers to the fact that God has "looked favourably on his people and redeemed them", and to the fact that God has "raised up a mighty saviour for us in the house of his servant David" (2:68-69). Even though not stated explicitly, read retrospectively in the light of 2:11 and 26, it becomes clear that Zechariah is referring to the birth of Jesus. Read in this light, the *Benedictus* is then far more messianic in tone than a cursory reading at first suggests. The doxology ends with an expression of hope for the dawning of a new age that will "give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace." The fact that Luke picks up on Mark's application of Isa 40:3 and Mal 3:1 to John's role in preparing the way for Jesus suggests that Luke has Jesus in mind as the Lord for whom, according to the angel, John will "make ready a people" (Luke 1:17), and it is Jesus, according to Zechariah, for whom John will "prepare his ways" (Luke 1:76). Although the references to *κύριος* in the texts from the Jewish Scriptures originally had God as their referent, the Markan tradition, taken over by Luke, had already reconfigured the title in reference to Jesus. In this way Luke has produced a text that could have proved extremely effective in resolving any ongoing conflict between the disciples of John and the disciples of Jesus in the world of the real author and audience. The following graphic symbolises the creation of ideological texture in the progressive texture of Luke's infancy narratives:



**Figure 10: Model of progressive texture creating ideological texture**

#### 4.8.2.2 Progressive texture enhances the creation of ideological texture.

Turning to the rhetorical construction of Luke's infancy narratives, an SRI analysis brings to light the ways in which Luke develops the storyline of his infancy narratives. He does so by weaving the two narrative themes into one narrational construct. I have argued that Luke carefully juxtaposes these two narrative themes. If my suggestion regarding possible conflict between the respective disciples of John and Jesus is correct, a possible motivation for Luke may lie in a desire to address such a conflicted pastoral situation, and to do so in such a way as to ascribe honour to John as the prophet, who has, after all, been called to an extremely important task: that of preparing the way for the σωτήρ ὃς ἐστὶν χριστὸς κύριος. At the same time the structure of the narrative enables Luke to show that, ultimately, Jesus is the promised one who must now be followed. He does so in such a way as to demonstrate sensitivity to the specific relevance of Jesus as the Lord of peace to Christians and potential believers in the Graeco-Roman world. The juxtaposition between the infancy narratives of John and Jesus provides the opportunity for the ascription of greater honour to Jesus in his divinely purposed role as the χριστὸν κυρίου.

By way of comparison, it is interesting to note that in the Gospel of John, John's first encounter with Jesus serves to highlight the messianic implications of Luke's message. In John 1:29, John the Baptist, using a creedal-like formulation, acknowledges Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. This fits with the highly developed Christology of John's Gospel that portrays the great honour ascribed to Jesus as the χριστός. The honour ascribed to Jesus in John 1:29 points to John also being subordinated to Jesus in the Gospel of John.

Luke, on the other hand, ascribes great honour to Jesus by increasingly and progressively clarifying the superiority of Jesus over John. In this way, Luke climaxes this development in the proclamation of Jesus as χριστὸν κυρίου (Luke 2:26). In Luke 2:11 it thus becomes clear that Jesus is the manifestation of God's power and authority. This is a key accomplishment in the development of the ideological texture of Luke's infancy narratives. Juxtaposed with John, the greatness of Jesus as χριστὸν κυρίου is emphasised. Jesus is the one for whom John the great prophet has come to prepare the way. The rhetorology of Luke 1 and 2 proclaims and celebrates the birth of Jesus in eschatological and messianic terms. This becomes clear (1) in the passages that tell of Gabriel's annunciation to Mary (1:32–33, 35); (2) Zechariah's doxological declaration regarding Jesus in 1:69; (3) the angel's declaration to the shepherds 2:11; and (4) in Simeon's acknowledgement of Jesus as the χριστὸν κυρίου (2:26).

It is ironic that the rhetology of the infancy narratives emphasises the greatness of Jesus as the eschatological *κύριος*, while the rhetography of the circumstances of his birth stress the common human circumstances. This portrayal of the humble circumstances of Jesus' birth is enhanced by the portrayal of his family's submission to Roman authority, evident in the way in which they cooperate with the emperor's decree to participate in the census. We have seen that Luke predominantly uses prophetic rhetorolect to portray the annunciations and birth of both John and Jesus. Luke's narrative proclaims that Jesus' position as *κύριος* results from his status as the one anointed by God. His birth marks the dawn of a new age for Israel, marked by the well-being brought to God's people by Jesus as God's agent of salvation, the *σωτήρ*.

In terms of oral-scribal intertexture with other Graeco-Roman literature, the miraculous birth of Jesus expresses elements of similarity to the birth accounts of historical figures, including Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great. In his commentary on a series of reliefs and inscriptions in the Deir el-Bahri temple in Egypt entitled "The birth of Queen Hatshepsut", Breasted (1906, 77, note 189) states that

Later every king claimed Amon (successor of Re) as physical father, and in Ptolemaic times the incidents in the divine birth of the king were regularly depicted in the temple reliefs. The most notable example in late times, Alexander the Great, who journeyed to the Oasis of Amon that he might be recognized as the god's son, was therefore merely acting in harmony with a state fiction as old as the Fifth Dynasty. He thus became the legitimate king of Egypt by the only possible means.

The infancy narratives of these great historical figures are used in ancient Mediterranean literature to point to their future greatness by showing that they are more than mere mortals. As in Luke's infancy narratives, their *son of god* strategy is used to facilitate the ascription of great honour to the historical figure concerned.

Titles, phrases and references in texts that tended to be reconfigured apocalyptically in the literature of Second Temple Judaism have been used differently in the rhetoric of Luke's infancy narratives. In the process, Luke has blended together various modes of discourse, including a predominance of prophetic rhetorolect, and some elements of wisdom, apocalyptic and priestly discourse. Sometimes such reconfiguration has been achieved by means of the different rhetorolects being blended within sentences and paragraphs. At other times it has been achieved by embedding ideas associated with apocalyptic texts of the period within material that predominantly uses prophetic discourse. In this way, Luke embeds Jesus inside John stories and then embeds John within Jesus stories, though to a lesser extent (there is no mention of John in the narrative of the birth of Jesus in 2:1–7, and

the Jesus narrative contains two additional units, also making no mention of John). Textual units concerning Jesus in 1:26–38 and 1:39–56 are embedded inside the account of the annunciation and birth of John. This structure is reversed later in the infancy narratives when Luke uses the *Magnificat* (1:46–55) and the account of the birth of Jesus (2:1–7) to frame the account of the birth of John and Zechariah’s *Benedictus*. The unfolding honour-power asymmetry between John and Jesus is hereby carefully camouflaged and compared rhetorically by the balanced structure of the resultant juxtaposition of John’s and Jesus’ births.

#### 4.9 CONCLUSION

Luke’s account of the birth of Jesus achieves a rhetorically persuasive proclamation of the birth of Jesus as the *σωτήρ* who is the *χριστός κύριος*. The birth and infancy narrative of Jesus begins with the account of the angel’s announcement to Mary, progresses to the declarations of Mary’s *Magnificat*, and this in turn leads to the account of Jesus’ birth. The narrative eventually reaches the point of the articulation of the royal messianic status of Jesus, as expressed by the use of the actual word *χριστός* in the declaration of the angel to the shepherds (2:11), and by Simeon in the temple (2:26). Elements of Luke’s narrative of the birth of John also enhance our understanding of the nature of the relationship between John and Jesus, especially Zechariah’s prophetic doxology declaring the subordinate relationship of his new born son John to Jesus who, by implication, is the *κέρας σωτηρίας ἡμῶν ἐν οἴκῳ Δαυὶδ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ* (1:69).

Luke’s account invites readers to participate actively in the narrative, inspired by the sensory-aesthetic texture of the text and potentially convinced by the way he employs rhetography to strengthen his argument. The resulting picture texture inspires and facilitates potential participation in the world of the narrative on the part of readers as the rhetoric implies an invitation to an appropriate response on the part of readers. The rhetology of Luke’s account makes a narrational case for the importance of the birth of Jesus and argues for the truth of Luke’s proclamation of Jesus as royal *σωτήρ*, *χριστός* and *κύριος*. By means of a comprehensive rhetorical strategy, Luke’s readers are encouraged to embrace Jesus as God’s *σωτήρ ὃς ἐστὶν χριστός κύριος*. In these infancy narratives, Luke has laid the groundwork for all that follows in Luke-Acts. The trajectory of the ascription of increasing levels of honour to Jesus has been key to the creation of ideological texture in Luke’s infancy narratives. The subordination of John to Jesus continues to be evident in his account of Jesus’ baptism by John, and in the Q material used to reassert the emergent asymmetrical honour-power relationship between the two.

## Chapter 5

### Summary and concluding comments

I have limited the parameters of my thesis to a focus on Luke 1:5–2:40, the birth and infancy narratives of John and Jesus. My preliminary analysis of opening-middle-closing texture in § 2.2.4.1 revealed that Luke has used a sequence of narrative units to structure his narratives. As noted there, the text of Luke 1:5–2:40 can be thought of as a narrative unit composed of a number of sub-units. This analysis highlighted a juxtaposing and weaving together of the birth and infancy narratives of John and Jesus. The results of my analysis of opening-middle-closing texture led to the formulation of my hypothesis, confirmed in my analysis, that Luke had as one of his major literary goals the demonstration of an asymmetrical honour-power relationship between John and Jesus. The development of progressive texture in the infancy narratives facilitates an increasing ascription of honour to Jesus, establishing him as the one ascribed the greater honour-power of the two figures. This, in turn, forms an integral part of the ideological texture in Luke's storyline. The progressive texture climaxes with the ascription of great honour to Jesus as the *σωτήρ ὃς ἐστὶν χριστὸς κύριος* by the angel appearing to shepherds, and by Simeon's prophetic recognition of Jesus as the *χριστὸν κυρίου*, on the occasion of his temple dedication.

#### 5.1 SUMMARY

The identified structure that results from the creation of opening-middle-closing texture in Luke's infancy narratives has formed the organisational framework for my thesis. I have used SRI as a range of interpretive analytics to investigate the rhetorical strategies used by Luke to achieve the rhetology of this juxtaposition. In the process it has become clear that Luke's rhetological goal is to establish the pre-eminence of Jesus in God's plan of salvation. My thesis shows that Luke uses ideological texture, revealed in the progressive texture of these narratives, to proclaim Jesus as God's *σωτήρ*, the one who is the *χριστὸς κύριος*. This is done in such a way as to imply a pastoral rhetoric, aimed at addressing any pastoral conflict situations potentially at play between disciples of John and of Jesus at the time that the Gospel of Luke and Book of Acts were written. The application of the SRI strategy to the analysis of Luke's infancy narratives in this way makes a contribution to Lukan research.

Luke has developed the storyline of his infancy narratives with the aim of declaring the annunciation and birth of John as the birth of a great prophet. My analysis highlights Luke's

progressive subordination of John's annunciation and birth to that of Jesus, while recognising the honour ascribed to John as the one who prepares the way for Jesus. Using a variety of rhetorical textures to develop his infancy narratives, Luke uses his juxtaposed narrative of the annunciation and birth of Jesus to demonstrate that Jesus is the Son of God, the Son of the Most High, the one who is to rule eternally on the throne of David as God's *σωτήρ*, *χριστός* and *κύριος*. He is to rule both Israel and, by implication, the whole *οἰκουμένην*.

The SRI interpretive analytic has enabled a detailed analysis of the rhetorical strategies used by Luke to achieve these ideologically and theologically motivated rhetorical goals. The analysis shows that Luke does this predominantly by means of the use of prophetic rhetorolect, being identified as the dominant discourse mode for Luke's infancy narratives.

Luke's narrative vividly incorporates images and pictures of religious, village and family life in the ancient Mediterranean world, identifiable in the rhetography of his narratives. The sensory-aesthetic texture enhances the rhetography of Luke's text and thereby strengthens his unfolding argument for Jesus as the promised *σωτήρ* and *χριστός*. Luke seeks to inspire his readers to imagine the sights and sounds of the temple, the sense of awe at being addressed in person by an angelic being in the context of sacred space, and the rugged simplicity of Jewish village life, with its related social customs and religious obligations.

Subtler, perhaps, is the presence of rhetology in Luke's infancy narratives. Luke uses various rhetorical textures to develop enthymematic arguments throughout. He develops his argument that the birth of Jesus is the birth of God's *σωτήρ* and *χριστός*. Using progressive and narrational texture, Luke presents a series of enthymemes, progressively strengthening his argument for John's subordination to Jesus, who is destined for a superior and universal role in salvation history. One key strategy for the development of this rhetology is the employment of various modes of oral-scribal and cultural intertexture. The intertexture anchors Luke's narratives in the cultural and religious heritage of the Jewish Scriptures and Second Temple Judaism.

Along with inner texture and intertexture, Luke also includes social and cultural texture, and sacred texture. By means of his portrayal of John's priestly lineage, for example, and the faithfulness of John's father serving in the sacred temple space, John is ascribed honour as a great prophet in the tradition of the HB prophet Elijah. The priestly rhetorolect used in the opening texture of Luke's infancy narratives, and the predominance of prophetic rhetorolect in his narrative of the birth of John, grounds John's later ministry in both the prophetic and priestly heritage of ancient Israel (see § 3.1.1). Luke employs prophetic

rhetorolect as the dominant mode of discourse in his infancy narratives. He has done so, in part, by means of oral-scribal intertexture, connecting the birth and infancy narrative of Jesus to texts from the Jewish Scriptures, and to cultural intertexture reflected in other texts, practices and events from the Second Temple Period and the Graeco-Roman world. Luke thus presents John as the great prophet, tasked with preparing the way for Jesus. He grounds his account of John in the prophetic tradition of the Jewish Scriptures, using prophetic discourse to connect John as prophet to the prophetic tradition of Israel.

## 5.2 IMPLICATIONS OF THE USE OF IDEOLOGICAL TEXTURE

In Luke's infancy narratives, the prophetic eschatological messianic hope that lies behind the rhetology of these narratives is expressed in the dominant use of prophetic rhetorolect. This is held in tension with the incarnational emphasis on real world space and time that is strengthened by the imagery of the rhetography of the narrative. The prophetic rhetorolect used in the angel's annunciation of the coming birth of Jesus manifests elements of *standardisation* as symbolic forms from the standard prophetic conceptual framework of messianic expectations. These symbolic forms are then applied to Jesus, the promised Saviour, Messiah, and Lord, in a way that assumes a commonly accepted basis for symbolic exchange. In Luke's proclamation of Jesus as the *χριστός*, his narrative employs *symbolisations of unity*, for example, in the angel's promise that God will give to Jesus "the throne of his ancestor David" (Luke 1:32). By this means Luke identifies the emergent messianic community with the heritage and messianic hopes of Israel, as part of a process of *unification*.<sup>137</sup>

These various aspects are used by Luke to demonstrate that Jesus surpasses John, his forerunner in honour and power, thereby preparing the way for Luke to develop his proclamation of Jesus as the *σωτήρ* and *χριστός* in Luke-Acts as a whole. The rhetorical emphasis on God's presence in the events of Luke's infancy narratives is reflected in the sacred texture of the narrative. It is expressed in the centrality of the temple in the opening and closing texture of his infancy narratives, and in the account of the angelic appearance to Zechariah the priest (Luke 1:5–23), to Mary (Luke 1:26–38), and to the shepherds in the field (Luke 2:8–15). Luke aligns Jesus with the temple as the centre of Jewish life in social-

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<sup>137</sup> For definitions *symbolisations of unity* (a strategy in the mode of *unification*), see § 2.2.8.2, especially Figure 3.

spatial terms during Jesus' lifetime. Important religious functionaries are also shown to have acknowledged Jesus as Israel's royal *χριστός* (Zechariah in 1:8–20 and, later, Simeon in 2:25–35 and Anna the prophet in 2:36–38 in the precincts of the temple). This presumably would have been an important point to be made for Luke's implied readers. Many of those who encountered Jesus had not accepted him as God's *χριστός*. His rejection had ultimately contributed to his crucifixion. A further implication of the rhetorology of Luke's infancy narratives is the *universalised* implication that all ought to embrace Jesus as God's *χριστός*, since religious functionaries present in connection with his birth did so in powerful ways.<sup>138</sup>

Having emphasised the place of the temple in the opening and closing texture of his infancy narratives. Luke later, ironically, uses the closing texture to diminish the importance of the temple in the lives of believers. In the passion narrative at the end of his gospel, the priestly temple leaders turn out to play an important role in the death of Jesus (Luke 22:66–71). The narrative seems to imply by this that, in Luke's broader understanding of salvation history, the day has dawned for the gradual diminishing of the temple's importance. This can be interpreted as Luke showing that the events surrounding the birth of Jesus, the *χριστὸν κυρίου*, mark the climax of God's redemptive work in and through the faith and cultural heritage of Israel and, as Zechariah implies in 1:78–79 and Simeon in 2:29–39, his birth marks the dawning of a new *universalised* reality. God's universal redemptive purposes are about to become clearer in the unfolding of the Luke-Acts narrative.

Luke thus has an overarching ideological agenda with theological aims in the progressive texture, by which he crafts the careful juxtaposing and interweaving of the two birth and infancy narratives. In this way, Luke is harnessing the politics of identity and power. As demonstrated in chapters 3 and 4 above, Luke employs a range of rhetorical strategies to reinforce the social power ascribed to John and to Jesus in the ideological texture of his infancy narratives.

### 5.3 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

The ideological texture of Luke's infancy narratives is thus located primarily in the juxtaposing and weaving together of the birth and infancy narratives of John and of Jesus and is developed in the progressive texture. Luke employs *narrativisation* as a major

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<sup>138</sup> See the work of Camp (2002) and Økland (2016) on the rhetorical role of space in narrative literature.

ideological strategy in this process. He hereby *legitimises* his account of the birth of Jesus as the birth of God's saviour and Christ. By means of this strategy, Luke achieves the ascription of great honour to Jesus as Israel's σωτήρ and χριστός, emphasised by the emerging unequal honour-power relationship between John and Jesus in the rhetology of Luke 1–2. The application of SRI in my analysis of Luke 1:5–2:40 has facilitated a thick description of the rhetoric of Luke's infancy narratives, demonstrably used by him to create an effective strand of ideological texture. By means of the overall argument of the infancy narratives, Luke shows Jesus to be worthy of allegiance because of his honour and power as the pre-eminent saviour.

This honour is *legitimately* ascribed to him by Luke's description of the circumstances surrounding his birth as they are revealed in the progressive texture. In the process, Luke has emphasised John's relationship to Jesus by demonstrating his fulfilment of the promises of the Jewish Scriptures, particularly the prophet Malachi. John is the one who prepares the way for Jesus. Luke's rhetorical strategy to achieve these ends is manifested in the ideological texture of his rhetology. In § 1.4.1, I indicated that the hypothesis of my thesis is that, "by setting up an asymmetrical power relationship between John and Jesus in the two infancy narratives, Luke incorporates a seam of ideological texture into the fabric of his discourse." I went on to indicate that "my central argument is that Luke uses a rhetorical strategy to ascribe greater honour to Jesus than to John" and that he hereby sets up an "unequal honour-power relationship between them, thus manifesting ideological texture by means of which he emphasises the theological importance of the birth of Jesus as God's Saviour and Messiah." My dissertation has confirmed my hypothesis but has brought to the fore the complexity of Luke's rhetorical strategy. The asymmetrical relationship between John and Jesus is not overtly laid out from the outset. In fact, initially John appears to be ascribed greater honour than Jesus. However, Luke's rhetology becomes clear in the progressive texture of his infancy narratives. Luke's rhetorical accomplishment is the creation of a text that ascribes honour to John and addresses a potential conflict situation possibly involving disciples of John, while subordinating John to Jesus and clarifying the ascription of honour to Jesus as God's σωτήρ ὃς ἐστὶν χριστὸς κύριος. These aspects result in the subtle *dissimulation* of John and Jesus in the juxtaposition of the two infancy narratives. By means of *unification*, Luke has created a sense of unity for his implied readers with their Jewish heritage, while doing so in such a way as to demonstrate relevance and the absence of threat to those in power in the Roman Empire. He thus *reifies* Roman rule while carefully proclaiming Jesus as the true υἱὸς θεοῦ, σωτήρ, χριστός, and κύριος.

#### **5.4 POTENTIAL FUTURE RESEARCH**

Since the focus of my thesis is limited specifically to the infancy narratives of John and Jesus in Luke 1:5–2:40, future SRI research will find much interesting material for fruitful analysis in the remaining verses of Luke 2 where Luke tells us the only canonical story we have of Jesus' boyhood, as well as the rest of Luke-Acts. As my analysis has shown, Luke is a master of rhetoric, especially in the use of intertexture and the development of ideological texture by means of various rhetorical strategies, such as the development of progressive texture. It would also be valuable to explore Luke's rhetorical strategies, especially in respect of later references to John in Luke's Gospel to ascertain similarities with with relevant sections of the John birth narrative, for example, what specific blended topics are identifiable, such as John's remarks about "children" of Abraham in Luke 3:7-9, representing a blend of wisdom and prophetic rhetorolects. Analysis of these and other aspects of the rest of Luke's writings promises fruitful research.

It would also be interesting to explore whether Luke 1-2 functions as programmatic discourse for the subsequent gospel narrative, establishing a more complex blending of rhetorolects than what is found in Q's programmatic discourse. As has been noted, priestly rhetorolect, for example, is absent from Q. Would it be possible, for example, to identify a connection between the progressive texture of Luke's infancy narratives and the progressive texture of the subsequent narrative?

#### **5.5 CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

The essential message of Luke's prophetic rhetorolect is that the birth of Jesus fulfils the expectation for the coming rule of God. However, at the same time, the circumstances surrounding the miraculous virgin conception and subsequent birth can hardly be regarded as common human circumstances. The use of the various rhetorical textures and rhetorolects has enabled Luke to communicate to his ancient Mediterranean readers his conviction that, in the birth of Jesus, messianic hopes have been fulfilled. The idea echoed in the allusion to Mal 3:1, 22–23 (LXX) and Isa 40:3 is developed and reconfigured into a clearer reference to these texts in Luke 1:76. In both these references, however, John still prepares the way for YHWH. Like Elijah before him, John will do so by calling them to repentance and into right relationships. The rhetology is developed in the progressive texture of the narratives until, later in Luke's narrative in 2:11, 26; 3:3, the subordination of

John to Jesus has unfolded to such an extent that the identity of the Lord for whom he prepares the way is specifically identified with Jesus.

Honour is ascribed to John in the angel's description of his role as the one who is to prepare the way for the *κύριος*. The development of the rhetology of the progressive texture in the narrative escalates in the ascription of honour to Jesus in his proclamation as the *σωτήρ ὃς ἐστὶν χριστὸς κύριος* (2:11), and his recognition as the *χριστὸν κυρίου* by Simeon (2:26). Retrospectively, the reader realises that, in Luke 1:17 and 76, Gabriel and Zechariah are declaring that John will exercise a preparatory and subordinate role to Jesus.

Luke appears to be laying the foundation for the future development of his Christology. The full meaning of the honour ascribed to Jesus continues to be developed and clarified in the rest of the narrative of Luke's Gospel and the Book of Acts. The ideological texture expressed in the increasing ascription of honour to Jesus in the infancy narratives enables Luke to declare unequivocally that Jesus is the *σωτήρ ὃς ἐστὶν χριστὸς κύριος*.

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