THE JEWS AND THE GENTILES IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE, CONCERNING THE SO-CALLED “UNIVERSALISM”

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I

A main characteristic of Lukan Gospel has often been found in his so-called “universalism,” especially by Anglo-Saxon scholars. It is treated by them as if it were an established theory.⁽¹⁾ In the recent studies, Lukan Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles are regarded as a connected work redacted by the evangelist Luke. Then, if universalism is a main characteristic of Lukan Gospel, it will be seen in the Acts of the Apostles, too. But what must be asked is the meaning of universalism in that case.

Universalism in early Christianity usually means a view that the gospel can be applied not only to the Jewish people but also to other people, namely, the “Gentiles.” Then this thought is opposed to nationalism, and therefore promotes the “Gentile Mission.” However, if it is so, universalism must also implicate the intention of dealing with the problems common in all human beings, because universality, in its proper sense, is a substance which can persuade all people. Paul, at least, strives to theorize such universalism. Then this concept is not only opposed to nationalism, but also to particularism. Yet, when the relation between Luke and Paul is considered, the wider meaning of universalism seems to be suggested.

The purpose of this paper is to re-examine the phase of Lukan universalism. Luke as an evangelist, not a theoretician, describes the problem of the Jews and the Gentiles in a concrete form. But this description reflects his approach to universalism, which was controlled by his social conditions, and performed its social functions at the same time. As mentioned above, Luke-Acts are a connected work, but, in this paper, I will investigate only Lukan Gospel as the present theme. Through such an attempt, it will be made clear how Luke

was concerned especially with the traditions about Jesus.

Although Lukan universalism has been widely acknowledged, some recent studies asked the relevance of that hypothesis. It seems to me that such a question arose from the ambiguity of the term "universalism." H. J. Cadbury already noticed this indirectly. According to him, the arguments that Lukan gospel is more universal than the others, "are often far-fetched and the evidence not all on one side."⁽²⁾ This inquiry came to draw attention of the scholars recently.

S. G. Wilson asserts that "the description of Luke's approach to the Gentiles as 'theological' is misleading, for the most striking characteristic of Luke-Acts is precisely the lack of any consistent theology of the Gentiles."⁽³⁾ "In his overall account of the Gentiles and the Gentile mission Luke clearly has a historical and practical rather than a theological interest at heart."⁽⁴⁾ "The most striking and important difference between Luke and Paul is that whereas Paul has a theology of the Gentiles, Luke has not."⁽⁵⁾ "Paul's approach is that of the theologian, Luke's that of the pragmatist."⁽⁶⁾ Certainly, since the method of "*Redaktionsgeschichte*" was introduced, the evangelist's "theology" has been easily discussed, though the evangelist was not a dogmatist.⁽⁷⁾ S. G. Wilson rightly suggested that the term "Lukan universalism" must be used carefully.

G. Lohfink's study about Lukan ecclesiology also goes the same direction.⁽⁸⁾ According to Lohfink, the essential point of Lukan ecclesiology depends on his interest in the process which leads to the church. To Luke, the formation of the church involved many stages from the Old Testament to the acceptance of the Gentiles.⁽⁹⁾ This "*Prozesscharakter*" of Lukan ecclesiology was combined with its "*Theozentrik*."⁽¹⁰⁾ The Gentile mission was, in this case, one of the stages which formed the true Israel. However this ecclesiology is not entirely original, and furthermore it must be asked if the concept "ecclesiology" is appropriate to this thought. Lohfink wanted to call it ecclesiology, although he agreed that Luke was not a "*Systematiker*." At any rate, it is certain that according to Lohfink's theory there cannot be Lukan "theology" of the Gentile mission.

Needless to say, there are still studies which emphasize Lukan universalism in compliance with the traditional view. For example, E. Güting attempted to prove Lukan tendency to universalism, analyzing the sentences Acts ii. 9-11.⁽¹¹⁾ In these passages, Luke listed the native places of the people who assembled in Jerusalem at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended

to the earth. Güting examined the names of the races cited here, and concluded that they set forth, as the representatives of all of mankind, the carriers of the new period in salvation history, introduced by the descent of the Holy Spirit. This list is regarded as the enumeration of the current languages known by Luke, not based on any geographical materials. According to Güting, Luke, through this paragraph, intended to justify the “*zentrifugal*” movement, which followed the Gentile mission, instead of the old “*zentripetal*” movement toward Zion.⁽¹²⁾

It is indisputable that Luke has an intention to universalize the message. However, the most important point of the problem is the meaning of this universality. If examined carefully, the level of Lukan universalism will be made clear.

II

Up to the present, many passages have been quoted as the examples to show Lukan universalism. But, if universalism only means the emphasis of the Gentile mission, it is not the original idea of the evangelist Luke. In comparison with the other Gospels, this fact is easily noticed.

The tendency towards the Gentiles had already appeared in the traditions, before the Synoptic Gospels were completed. On these traditions a part of Lukan accounts of the Gentiles is founded. Luke adopted some of them into his Gospel without recomposition. For example, “the parable of the wicked husbandman” (xx. 9–19) is referred to in nearly the same form as the former tradition, though it has become rather simple (cf. Mk. xii. 1–12). As for the connection between the kingdom of God and the Gentiles, Matthew’s parallel (xxi. 33–46) tells more clearly (especially verse 43).⁽¹³⁾ Furthermore, the story of “the centurion’s servant” (vii. 1–10, cf. Mt. viii. 5–13, Joh. iv. 46–54), the words at “the sending out of the seventy” (x. 1–16, especially 13–15, cf. Mt. xi. 21–23), the words of “the sign for this generation” (xi. 29–32, cf. Mt. xii. 38–42) etc. are also ascribed to the older traditions (probably Q), and do not contain any remarkable variations by Luke. Far from that, “the parable of the great supper” (xiv. 16–24) seems to put stress on the openness to the Gentiles, as compared with Matthew’s parallel, “the parable of the marriage feast” (Mt. xxii. 1–14). But, in spite of the complex relation of the materials, Lukan version, here also, stands closer to the former tradition.⁽¹⁴⁾

In short, Luke does not positively assert his opinion in these passages, though he shows his agreement to the thoughts contained within the traditions, by adopting them. The tendency towards the Gentiles, expressed there, is the warning that the gospel will be transmitted to the Gentiles, because of the wickedness in the Israelites. So, for the most part, God's anger with the Jews is emphasized and the Gentiles are rather dealt with negatively. The 'theology' of the Gentile mission is missing naturally. Therefore universalism as a theory cannot be found.

On the other hand, Luke omits some traditions concerning the Gentiles, which were adopted by Mark and Matthew. For instance, the story of "the Syro-Phoenician woman" (Mk. vii. 24-30, Mt. xv. 21-28) is omitted by Luke. This is part of the so-called "Great Omission" in Lukan Gospel and so does not prove his negative estimation about such a story which states the favorable attitude of Jesus towards the Gentiles. Moreover, Mk. x. 45 (cf. Mt. xx. 28, Lk. xxii. 27), xi. 17 (cf. Mt. xxi. 13, Lk. xix. 46), xiv. 9 (cf. Mt. xxvi. 13) etc. also do not have the reference to the Gentiles in Lukan version. But, they appear to be unintentional variations, and not evidence that Luke rejects the Gentile mission. On the contrary, Luke lacks some accounts of Matthew's Gospel which contain negative words in regard to the Gentiles. Mt. x. 5 f.: "Do not take the road to gentile lands, and do not enter any Samaritan town; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (NEB) and similar words in Mt. xv. 24 are representative. They are considered as that which Matthew added intentionally, not what Luke omitted. So, after all, the traces of Lukan thought cannot be found in these passages.

If universalism is an important factor for Luke, it must be reflected in his own expressions. To be sure, a certain passage from his original source shows the universality of the gospel. Especially, the following five passages are remarkable among them.⁽¹⁵⁾

- ii. 10: "Do not be afraid; I have good news for you: there is great joy coming to *the whole people* (*παντὶ τῷ λαῷ*)" (a word of the angel to the shepherds).
- ii. 31 f.: "...the deliverance which thou hast made ready in full view of *all the nations* (*πάντων τῶν λαῶν*): a light that will be a revelation to *the heathen* (*ἐθνῶν*), and glory to thy people Israel" (a hymn of Simeon).⁽¹⁶⁾
- iii. 6: "...and *all mankind* (*πᾶσα σὰρξ*) shall see God's deliverance" (a

citation from Isaiah).

- iv. 25 ff.: "There were many widows in Israel, you may be sure, in Elijah's time, when for three years and six months the skies never opened, and famine lay hard over the whole country; yet it was to none of those that Elijah was sent, but to *a widow at Sarepta in the territory of Sidon*. Again, in the time of the prophet Elisha there were many lepers in Israel, and not one of them was healed, but *only Naaman, the Syrian*" (a word of Jesus).

- xxiv. 47: "... and that in his name repentance bringing the forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed to *all nations* (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη)" (a word of resurrected Jesus).

But, we must ask if "λαός" in ii. 10 points to the Gentiles, because "λαός" (singular) generally means the nation of Israel. In spite of this fact, there are always some scholars who read the universalistic meaning here presupposing Lukan universalism.⁽¹⁷⁾ Such an interpretation may be provoked by "χριστός κύριος" in the next verse. However, ii. 14 is rather preferable than ii. 10, as an expression of universality in the gospel. Many scholars rightly suggested that "λαός" in ii. 10 cannot have any other meaning than the nation of Israel after all.⁽¹⁸⁾ Accordingly, when Lukan tendency towards universalism is discussed, this passage must be excluded from the evidence.

On the other hand, it may be said for the rest that the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles is emphasized there.⁽¹⁹⁾ And that the spread is positive, in so far as it is supposed without the rejection of Israel, though iv. 25 ff. is the only exception. So the tendency towards universality may be picked up in these passages.⁽²⁰⁾ However, being observed in relation to Jesus, they are the infancy narratives, the first mission story and the post-resurrection narrative. They are not the reports about his real activities.⁽²¹⁾ In brief, Luke the evangelist definitely used a sort of universalistic motif when he intended to cover the traditions about Jesus with his own frame and connect the story of Gospel with the Acts of the Apostles. So, he repeated again the motif of Lk. xxiv. 47 in Acts. i. 8, using the different words.

III

On the basis of the above-mentioned observations, our next step is to ask if the so-called "Lukan universalism" was universal in the true sense. Furthermore,

at the same time, it must also be asked why Luke formed such an opinion in his own historical situation.

If the passages in which Luke positively discussed the expansion of the gospel to the Gentiles (that is, ii. 31 f., xxiv. 47) are considered in their contexts, it will be made clear that Luke did not necessarily put the Gentiles in the center of his thoughts. The hymn of Simeon (ii. 31 f.) surely says of the deliverance of "all the nations," "a light that will be a revelation to the heathen," but it is persistently connected with the glory of Israel (*καὶ δόξαν λαοῦ σου Ἰσραήλ*). This expression alludes to the word of Isaiah (cf. xlii. 6, xlix. 6) and does not contain any other idea than the former tradition about the Gentiles, though "a light" referred to Jesus.⁽²²⁾ Moreover, according to the Lukan narrative, the hymn of Simeon was offered in the temple at Jerusalem. Simeon dwelt in Jerusalem by himself and "watched and waited for the restoration of Israel" (ii. 25). So the universal motif in ii. 31 f. could not overcome the priority of Israel after all.

In xxiv. 47 and Acts i. 8, the same problem is pointed out, too. In both passages, Luke states that the mission to all nations will begin in Jerusalem (xxiv. 47: *ἀρχάμενοι ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλήμ*). And Acts i. 8 suggests some stages of the mission, i. e. "in Jerusalem," "all over Judaea and Samaria" and "away to the ends of the earth." At any rate, for Luke, the center of the Gentile mission was Jerusalem to the last.⁽²³⁾ In general, Jerusalem is a main motif of Lukan thought, as many recent scholars have shown repeatedly.⁽²⁴⁾ The vision of the Gentile mission was also put in the frame of this motif. Therefore, the so-called universalism in Lukan Gospel is nothing but a variation of the nationalism in Israel, though there is a certain tendency towards the Gentiles.

Universalism, in its true sense, means not only the intention of going over the boundary between the nations, but also a theory which is appropriate to all nations. If universalism is insisted practically in the absence of such a universal theory, it happens that everyone is forced to accept a particular opinion. This is not universalism, but particularism. When anyone intends to persuade universal salvation, his opinion must be a theory rooted in the nature of human beings. Paul undoubtedly aims at that theory as much as he can within the capacity of a Jew. However, in the history of the interpretation, Paul was often regarded as an opponent against the Jews. In that case, his thought is also made into particularism in the reverse meaning.⁽²⁵⁾ In all events, Luke could not bring forward genuine universalism. Concern-

ing this matter, Paul as a theologian was more theoretic than Luke the evangelist.

Luke was acutely conscious of the distance between Jesus and himself both in time and in space.⁽²⁶⁾ So it was the fundamental motivation of his work to fill this gap. He attempts to bridge this gap with his original literary imagination.⁽²⁷⁾ Thus Lukan view of "*Heilsgeschichte*" was introduced into his Gospel and Acts. To put emphasis upon the universalistic motif is a result caused by this view. Therefore, from the beginning, the universalistic words in Luke indicated a sort of vision, not a general theory about the salvation of human beings. The approach of the Jews towards the Gentiles was seen previously in "Hellenistic Judaism."⁽²⁸⁾ In that meaning, the Lukan universalistic motif had been prepared in the former traditions. Luke, using it in his works, connected it with the concept, "Holy Spirit," which had a rather complicated background. It is not accidental that ii. 31 f. and Acts i. 8 are related to the Holy Spirit. He wanted to present it as a kind of universalistic concept, but, in this case also, the pneumatology as a theory cannot be found.⁽²⁹⁾

According to what we presume, Luke the evangelist was a Gentile Christian and wrote his Gospel in a certain country except Palestine.⁽³⁰⁾ Perhaps he was an intellectual Hellenist who led a wandering life and had no country to settle in. If he made good use of his situation, he could have had an insight into human nature, unrestricted by the national condition, and could have developed the theory of salvation. Yet, he did not choose such a possibility but basically followed the former tradition. It was the way of an evangelist. Consequently, when Luke introduced the universalistic expression in order to fill the gap between Jesus and himself, it became, after all, an apology for his unsteady status as a Gentile Christian. He tried to assimilate himself to the Israelite community.⁽³¹⁾ Namely, his universalistic intention was none other than the extension of particularism. By this means, Luke wanted to be and thought to be "universalist." Nevertheless, since he was a Gentile, his problems which could not be treated in the Israelite community must have been left untouched.

In his approach to the problem of the Jews and the Gentiles, Luke has something in common with Matthew, who did not distinguish his community from Israel.⁽³²⁾ But, Lukan standpoint as a Gentile Christian was really different from that of Matthew as a Jewish Christian.⁽³³⁾ In Luke, the idea does not necessarily correspond to the reality. This is an important cognition in considering Lukan thought. Yet, "universalism" as an idea, because of its unreality, influences reversely the reality, covering it from the outside. So it may be

said that Luke provided an opportunity for Christianity as a dominant ideology, which was developed afterward, in a different way, through "Paulinism."⁽³⁴⁾

With the expansion of Christianity, "universalism" took various forms, though they had the same structure. The "Israelite community" was reproduced according to the political situations in those days, as the Roman Empire, European world, U. S. A., etc. And, as far as the word "universal" had no substance, the "Gentiles" must have also been reproduced in the new types. The definition of the so-called "world religion" or "universal religion" may be re-examined from this viewpoint.

Notes

- (1) For example, V. Taylor, art. "Gospel of Luke," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, III, p. 183, D. G. Miller, art. "Lukasevangelium," *Biblisch-historisches Handwörterbuch*, II, S. 1112 f. They first enumerate "universalism" in the characteristics of Lukan Gospel. But, German scholars do not necessarily refer to it. Cf. P. Feine / J. Behm / W. G. Kümmel, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, Heidelberg 1965¹⁴, S. 72-94. W. Marxsen, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament: Eine Einführung in ihre Probleme*, Gütersloh (1963), 1964³, S. 137-143.
- (2) H. J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts* (New York 1927), London 1958. p. 254.
- (3) S. G. Wilson, *The Gentiles and the Gentile Mission in Luke-Acts*, Cambridge 1973, p. 239.
- (4) *ibid.*, p. 246.
- (5) *ibid.*, p. 252.
- (6) *ibid.*, p. 254.
- (7) In the case of the evangelists, the expressions such as "thought," "intention." "motif" are more adequate.
- (8) G. Lohfink, *Die Sammlung Israels: Eine Untersuchung zur lukanischen Ekklesiologie*, München 1975.
- (9) *ibid.*, S. 93. "An diesem Prozess, der zur Kirche führt, ist Lukas mehr als an allem anderen interessiert; hier liegt der Angelpunkt seiner Ekklesiologie. Für ihn war die Entstehung der Kirche ein Weg mit vielen Abschnitten und Stufen, ähnlich wie es die Erhöhung Jesu in seine himmlische Herrlichkeit war."
- (10) *ibid.*, S. 96. "Der Prozesscharakter, den die Entstehung der Kirche bei Lukas hat, und die Theozentrik der lukanischen Ekklesiologie gehören somit aufs engste zusammen und bedingen sich gegenseitig."
- (11) E. Güting, "Der geographische Horizont der sogenannten Völkerliste des Lukas (Acta 2,9-11)" *ZNW*, 66, 1975, S. 149-169.
- (12) *ibid.*, S. 169. "Die alte für das Selbstverständnis der Urgemeinde konstitutive Erwartung einer zentripetalen Bewegung ist faktisch mit dem Beginn der Heidenmission abgelöst durch eine zentrifugale Bewegung. Diese hat Lukas mit seiner Darstellung gerechtfertigt."
- (13) W. Grundmann, J. Ernst etc. intend to read Lukan "heilsgeschichtliche Interpretation" in the expression "went abroad for a long time" (xx. 9). W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas (Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament)*, Berlin, 1971, S. 372 Anm. 1. J. Ernst, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas (Regensburger Neues Testament)*, Paderborn, 1977, S. 536. But, it cannot be decided whether this expression is a theological addition or not.
- (14) This parable finds its parallel in the Gospel according to Thomas (Logion 64). A Guila-

- mont / H. Ch. Puech / G. Quispel / W. Till / Yassah 'Abd Al Masih (ed.), *The Gospel according to Thomas*, Leiden, 1959. It has a resemblance to Lukan version. Perhaps both versions reflect the older pattern. Cf. J. Jeremias, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*, (Zürich, 1947), Göttingen, 1962⁶, S. 176.
- (15) The English translation is cited from NEB and underlined by the writer.
 - (16) Bezae Cantabrigiensis omits *ἐθνῶν*, perhaps "because of the grammatical difficulty." A. R. C. Leaney, *The Gospel according to St. Luke (Black's New Testament Commentaries)*, London (1958), 1966², p. 100.
 - (17) As an example from the recent scholars, Grundmann maintains this interpretation. W. Grundmann, *op. cit.*, S. 82. "Sie (=Grosse Freude) gilt aber nicht nur den Hirten, sondern dem ganzen Volke; vielleicht ist *παντὶ τῷ λαῷ* aramäisch kol-amah=jedermann universal zu verstehen, so Tat und syrⁱⁿ, die „die ganze Welt“ lesen. Die Hirten sind die erwählten Vertreter des ganzen Volkes und sogar der ganzen Menschheit."
 - (18) H. Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium (Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament)*, Erster Teil (Kommentar zu Kap. 1, 1–9, 50), Freiburg, 1969, S. 110, J. Ernst, *op. cit.*, S. 108, etc..
 - (19) *λαός*, *ἔθνος*, *σάραξ* in plural indicate the Gentiles, though there are some differences in nuance.
 - (20) When the wickedness of Israel is united with the Gentile mission, the tendency towards universality does not always exist, because the opinion can be transformed into so-called "Verstockungstheorie" (cf. Rom. ix–xi). This is none other than the apology for the Jews.
 - (21) Wilson makes a right observation on Jesus in Lukan Gospel, when he wrote that Jesus himself had not expected a historical Gentile mission because Jesus' eschatological expectations logically disallowed it. S. G. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
 - (22) Is. xlii. 6, xlix. 6 are scarcely cited in the rabbinic literature. Yet, Is. lx. 3 which has the same meaning as those passages is often mentioned (cf. Mt. iv. 16). H. L. Strack / P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, II, München, 1924, S. 139.
 - (23) The idea that salvation begins in Jerusalem is popular in the rabbinic literature. H. L. Strack / P. Billerbeck, *op. cit.*, S. 300.
 - (24) H. Conzelmann, *Die Mitte der Zeit: Studien zur Theologie des Lukas*, Tübingen (1954), 1962⁴, S. 124.
According to the traditional interpretations, the beginning of the mission from Jerusalem has been regarded as an indisputable historical fact. E. Klostermann, *Das Lukasevangelium (Handbuch zum Neuen Testament)*. Tübingen (1929), 1975³, S. 242.
 - (25) K. Stendahl rightly sees that Paul's basic concern is "the relation between Jews and Gentiles." K. Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, Philadelphia, 1976, p. 1.
 - (26) E. Schweizer, *Jesus Christus im vielfältigen Zeugnis des Neuen Testaments*, München und Hamburg, 1968, S. 136 f.. G. Bornkamm, *Bibel: Das Neue Testament (Themen der Theologie, Band 9)*, Stuttgart, 1971, S. 77.
 - (27) H. Tsuchiya, "The History and the Fiction in the Birth Stories of Jesus: An Observation on the Thought of Luke the Evangelist," *Annual of the Japanese Biblical Institute*, I, Tokyo, 1975, pp. 73–90 (written in English).
 - (28) Concerning the Hellenistic Judaism, cf. M. Hengel, *Juden, Griechen und Barbaren: Aspekte der Hellenisierung des Judentums in vorchristlicher Zeit*, Stuttgart, 1976. "Aufs Ganze gesehen kann man darum das Judentum der hellenistisch-römischen Zeit im Mutterland wie in der Diaspora als »hellenistisches Judentum« bezeichnen" (S. 174–175).
 - (29) H. Tsuchiya, "'Holy Spirit' in the Gospel according to Luke," *The Annual Report on Cultural Science (The Faculty of Letters, Hokkaido University)*, xxv–1 (No. 39), 1976, pp. 39–70 (written in Japanese).

- (30) P. Feine / J. Behm / W. G. Kümmel, *op. cit.*, S. 91–94. W. Marxsen, *op. cit.* S. 142 f..
- (31) W. Eltester, “Israel im lukanischen Werk und die Nazarethperikope,” *BZNW* 40, Berlin, 1972, S. 76–147. Accordingly, it looks as if Lukan thinking put stress on the community. S. Brown, *Apostasy and Perseverance in the Theology of Luke*, Rome, 1969.
- (32) K. Tagawa, “People and Community in the Gospel of Matthew,” *NTS* xvi, 1969–1970, pp. 149–162.
- (33) It is hardly possible that Matthew was a Gentile Christian, in spite of some recent hypotheses. G. D. Kilpatrick, *The Origins of the Gospel according to St. Matthew*, Oxford, 1946.
- (34) M. Hengel’s opinion that “*Heilsgeschichte*” in Luke means “*Missionsgeschichte*” is adequate in a sense, though he may not mean it. M. Hengel, “Die Ursprünge der christlichen Mission,” *NTS* xviii, 1971–1972, pp. 15–38. Moreover, cf. P. Zingg, *Das Wachsen der Kirche: Beiträge zur Frage der lukanischen Redaktion und Theologie*, Freiburg, 1974. He supposes in Luke “*Heils-und Segensgeschichte*” (S. 297).