



CHAPTER 2: 46-52

The Gospel of Luke

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For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten Tradition received from Christ and handed down Orally by the Apostles and their Successors. The Church founded by Christ on Peter, and only that Church, has been Empowered by Christ to 'Interpret' His Teaching Authoritatively in His Name.

Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent* that He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.

Luke's gospel is a compilation of various interviews with eye-witnesses and close followers of Jesus (Luke 1:1-4). The author, Luke, probably did not become a Christian until several years after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He is first mentioned (implicitly) in Acts 16:10 (Acts is another book of the New Testament which Luke wrote). He did not, therefore, meet Jesus in the flesh and he himself was not an eye-witness.

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapide's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapide's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

Continuation of Luke 2: 46-52

Ver. 46.—*And it came to pass, that after three days they found Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions. After three days*, that is, on the third day. The first day was that on which they left Jerusalem; the second, that on which, not finding Him at the inn, they returned; and the third, when they sought and found the Holy Child in the Holy Temple. So S. Ambrose, Euthymius, and others. Just as we read in ver. 21, “When the eight days were accomplished”—that is, on the eighth day—Jesus was circumcised. And in S. Mark viii. 31, “The Son of Man must suffer many things . . . after three days (that is, on the third day) to rise again.”

In the Temple—For the place of God Incarnate is in the Temple. There is He to be sought, there shall He be found—not in the market-place, not in the tavern, not in the theatre. S. Basil and S. Gregory Nazianzen imitated Christ, for they, according to Ruffinus, when they were studying at Athens, knew but two streets in the city—one

led to the church and the other to the school.

The whole of these three days, then, Jesus spent in praying and hearing and answering the doctors in the Temple; His food He received from the doctors, who, being present, and admiring His wisdom, invited Him. Others, with less probability, think that He lived by begging from door to door; such is the opinion of S. Bernard (*Hom. infra Oct. Epiphan.*), Bonaventura, Alensis, and others. S. Thomas, in the Summa, favours this view, proving that Christ did sometimes beg, from the words of Ps. xl. 17, "But I am poor and needy." On the other hand, Nicholas de Lyra, Dionysius the Carthusian, John the Greater, commenting on this passage, and John of Avila, on S. Matt. xvii., hold that Christ never begged, begging having been unlawful among the Jews. "There shall be no poor among you," Deut. xv. 4. However, these words are not a precept, but a promise of riches, if they obey the Law of God.

Sitting in the midst of the doctors. A Hebraism—among the doctors, but in a lowly position like a disciple, in order that He might rouse them to think and inquire about the advent of the Messiah, which was now nigh at hand, because the sceptre had departed from Judah, and the seventy weeks of Daniel and other oracles of the prophets were now fulfilled. It is very probable that Christ questioned the doctors about the coming of the Messiah, so that His manifestation might not be unexpected, but that, afterwards, when preaching and working miracles, He might the more readily be received by them as the Messiah, from these same indications which now flashed out like sparks upon them.

Asking them questions. (1.) Because it was fitting that the child should ask questions of these learned men, and not teach them. (2.) To teach the young modesty, and the desire to hear, to question, and to learn, "Lest," says Bede, "if they will not be disciples of the truth, they become masters of error." (3.) That, asking them questions, He might be questioned in turn by them, and might teach them by His replies.

Ver. 47.—And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. That a child of twelve, the son of a carpenter, one who had never attended the schools, should be so versed in Holy Scripture, should question so wisely and answer so intelligently as to surpass even the doctors themselves, so that they said, "What thinkest thou that this child will be?"—will He be a Prophet? will He be the Messiah, whom we all anxiously expect from day to day to be the Teacher of the World?

Ver. 48.—And when they saw him, they were amazed. His parents, who were seeking Him, wondered and rejoiced at finding Him alone disputing with the doctors, manifesting such wisdom, while the doctors, and all the rest who were present, wondered at Him.

And His mother said unto Him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing—the Arabic adds, “with labour.” Such are the words of His mother, not as finding fault with Christ, but in wonder and in sorrow, and sorrowfully unfolding her grief. The reverence felt by this mother for her Child—the God-Man—assures us of this; so it is most likely that she said this to Him, not publicly in the assemblage of doctors, but privately, calling Him aside, or when the assembly had dispersed. So Jansenius, Maldonatus, and others.

Thy father and I. S. Augustine (*Serm. 63 De Diversis*, xi.) remarks upon the, humility of the Virgin, who, knowing that she was in every sense (in solidum) the Mother of Christ, and, therefore, of God, and that Joseph had no part in begetting Him, yet modestly puts herself after Joseph as her husband. “She expresses herself always,” says an anonymous writer in the “*Catena Græcca*,” like a mother, with trustfulness, humility, and affection.”

Tropologically, let the soul that has separated itself from Jesus by mortal sin, or from its wonted communion with Him by venial negligence, seek Him again (1) with the sorrow and tears of a penitent heart, for, as S. Gregory Nazianzen says (*Orat. 3*), “the tears of righteous men” (and of sinful too, if they repent) “are the flood that covers sin, and the expiation of the world, as was Noah’s flood;” (2) with earnestness and solicitude, as the Blessed Virgin did, and that in the Temple, by passing some time in prayer and in spiritual reading and meditation; (3) among the doctors, among learned and good men, who shall instruct the soul as well in knowledge as in piety.

Ver. 49.—*And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?* S. Ambrose holds that these are the words of one administering reproof. And Christ, as the Messiah, and as a Lawgiver, might rightfully have reproved His mother had she sinned. But there was no blemish of sin in His mother, neither therefore was there any reproof on the part of Christ. Still, there is in the words a certain sharpness of tone, savouring of reproof, that He may teach them by His question and incite them the more keenly to learn the things that concerned Him, just as parents are wont to stimulate their children to zeal and diligence with sharp words, and masters their pupils. These words of Christ, then, are the words of one instructing and consoling; excusing himself, and defending what he has done:—There was no need for you to seek Me, for you might have considered that I was treating concerning the beginning of that business, the salvation of the world, for which My Father sent Me. Neither must you suppose that I shall always remain with you; some day I shall leave you and go away about this business, as I have already begun to do. And, as for My going without your knowledge, I did so purposely, to teach you that, in these matters, I depend not on you, but on My Heavenly Father, and that I must act according to His will and His plan. It is not I, then, who have given you cause for sorrow, but partly your love for Me and partly your ignorance of the mystery I have now told you of; you knew not that I was occupied with My Father’s affairs. For, though this ought to have presented itself to your mind, your tender love prevented it, and turned aside the thought. Hence Bede says, “He blames her not because she sought Him as her son, but forces her to raise the eyes of her mind to what He owes Him whose Eternal Son He is.”

2. In us grace:

(A) wipes out original sin, and whatever actual sins there may be, and so

(B) makes us pleasing to God; but in Christ grace existed not only previously to sin, but actually without it, sanctifying Him *per Se primo*, for from the grace of the union with the Word emanated habitual grace, as rays from the sun, immediately and naturally. So that we are adopted and are called sons of God, but Christ is truly and naturally the Son of God, as S. Hilary (*De Trinit.*, 1. xii.), and Cyril (*In Joannem*, 1. iii. c. xii.), teach.

3. In us grace is peculiar to the individual, justifying the man in whom it resides; but the grace of Christ is the grace of the Head, and so sanctifying us. For “of His fulness have we all received, and grace for grace” S. John i. 16.

4. Grace increases in us (even in the case of the Blessed Virgin) by good works; but in Christ it did not increase, because, proceeding from the union with the Word, which from the beginning was full and perfect, this fullness of grace, which could not be increased, was given Him at the moment of that union.

Tropologically, Damascene (*De fide*, 1 iii c. xxii.) says that Christ progresses in wisdom and grace, not in Himself, but in His members, that is, in Christians. For He went on producing greater acts of virtue day by day that He might teach us to do the same. All our life is without ceasing either a progress or a falling off; when it is not becoming better it is becoming worse, as S. Bernard tells us. Ep. 25.

With God and man. “For,” says Theophylact, “it behoves us to please God first and then man.” If we please God He will make us pleasing to men. It is not enough to please man, for this is often false and feigned, nor to please God only, for this is peculiar to oneself and unseen, but we must please “God and man,” that we may show to men that grace by which we are pleasing to God, and so attract them to it. “To God,” says S. Bernard, “we owe our conscience, to our neighbours our good reputation.”

progressed in wisdom before God and men, not that He received any increase, since He was, from the beginning, absolute in grace and wisdom, but these gradually became apparent to men [hitherto] unaware of them.” For, as Theophylact says, “the shining forth of His wisdom is this very progress;” just as the sun, though it always gives the same degree of light, yet is said to increase in light as it unfolds it more and more from morning until midday. It is to be noted that there were in the soul of Christ three kinds of knowledge—

(1) *beatific*, by which He saw God, and all things in God, and so was rendered blessed;

(2) knowledge *infused* by God;

(3) *experimental* knowledge guided by daily use. The two former were implanted in Christ in so perfect a degree from the first moment of His conception that He could not increase them. I assert the same with respect to His habitual grace and glory. So say S. Augustine (*De peccat. mor. et rem.*, 1. iii. c. xxix.), S. Jerome (on the words of Jer. xxxi. 22, “A woman shall compass a man”), S. Athanasius, Cyril, S. Gregory Nazianzen, Bede, and others, S. Thomas and the schoolmen everywhere—for this is required by the hypostatic union.

Christ, therefore, is said to have progressed in wisdom and grace as He progressed in years—

1. In the estimation of men, and in outward seeming. For sometimes Scripture speaks according to what is seen outwardly, and the judgment formed by men. So Origen, Theophylact, Nazianzen, S. Athanasius, and Cyril.

2. Christ did really increase in *experimental* wisdom, for from mere use He acquired experience—“He learned obedience by the things which He suffered” Heb. v. 8.

3. Though Christ did not increase in habitual, yet He did increase in actual and practical wisdom and grace. For, even while yet a child, He daily exerted more and more of the strength of mind and heavenly wisdom that lay hidden in His soul; so that in face and manner, in word and deed, He ever acted with greater and greater modesty, gravity, prudence, sweetness, and piety.

To the objection that Christ is said to have increased in grace *before God*, S. Thomas (p. iii. Quæst. vii.), answers that Christ increased in grace in Himself, not as regards the habit, but as regards the acts and effects produced by it.

Among other differences between the grace which Christ had, and that which we have, there are the four following:—

1. Christ had grace, as it were, naturally by virtue both of the hypostatic union and of His conception of the Holy Ghost; but with us all grace is undue, gratuitous, adventitious, and supernatural.

In order to understand this thoroughly we must notice that Christ, besides His *Divine* actions, which He had as God and the Son of God, such as creating, preserving, and ruling all things, and breathing the Holy Spirit, had *human* actions of two kinds. Of these He had some as man, common to Him with other men, eating, walking, labouring, &c.; others were proper to Him as the God-Man, the Redeemer, the Christ, and these actions are called by S. Dionysius “Theandric” (*Θεοζ ἀννηζ*); being the works partly of God and partly of a man. Such actions were those of teaching, working miracles, calling His disciples, creating and ordaining apostles, &c. In respect of the former class of actions Christ was willing to obey His parents; but as to the latter He would obey only God His Father, because these, as being of a higher order, were received by and were under the direction of God alone. Wherefore He answered His parents, when they sought an explanation of His conduct, that these things were to be done, not at their will and pleasure, but at God’s—as appears from this passage, and at the marriage at Cana, in the turning of the water into wine, S. John ii. 4, and in other similar cases.

And these actions which Christ did as the God-Man He calls the actions of God His Father, and attributes to His Father, not to Himself (1) because on account of these works He was sent by His Father into the world; (2) because He had His Divinity from the Father, and these were the works chiefly of His Divinity; (3) because He did them by the Father’s command; (4) because in these matters He was subject to no one but His Eternal Father, to teach us that God’s command or counsel must come before even the tenderest love for mother—as when God calls any one to religion, to the priesthood, to martyrdom, or to the apostolate, and his parents are opposed to the call.

Ver. 50.—*And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them.* Some make these words refer to the ignorance of those who stood by, who were astonished at the wisdom and the answers of Jesus—others to Joseph alone by a synecdoche. But they clearly refer both to the Blessed Virgin and Joseph; for, though they knew that their Jesus was Christ, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, still they did not understand in what manner He was going to set about the work of this His office, or what was that business of His Father which He had said that it behoved Him to be about—that is to say, whether, or when, or how He was going to teach, to live, to die, and to be crucified for the salvation of the world; for these things had not yet been revealed to them by God. However, they learnt all this in progress of time, either by experience or by revelation from Jesus. And, out of reverence for Him, they durst not ask Him curiously in this place what those mysteries were, but prudently awaited the fitting opportunity.

Ver. 51.—*And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth and was subject unto them.* He “came to Nazareth” of His own accord, notwithstanding that S. Bernard says (*Serm. 19 in Cant.*), “Having remained in Jerusalem, and having told them that He must needs be engaged in what belonged to His Father, He yet did not disdain to follow them to Nazareth—the Master—the disciples—God—Men, the Word and Wisdom,—a carpenter and a woman.”

Subject. In the Greek *ὑποκείμενος*, *obedient*, that is, as regards His *human* nature, not as regards His *Divine* nature, as S. Augustine shows, in opposition to the Arians (*Contra Maximinum*, lib. iii. cap. xviii.)

Observe that the human nature in Christ, though considered in itself, it was under the rule of His mother, yet, being elevated by God to the Person [Hypostasis] of the Word, and being, therefore, one with God—one Divine Person—was, for this reason, exempt from the obligation of obedience to His mother as much as from that of obedience to the laws of Augustus and all other worldly authorities. Just as a member of a religious order, if he be made Pope, is exempted from the obedience of his order, and, indeed, becomes its superior. Yet Christ, to give us an example of profound humility and perfect obedience, made Himself subject to His mother, and to Joseph too.

Let children learn, says S. Augustine (*Serm. 63 De Diversis*), to be subordinate to their parents, because the world is subject to Christ, and yet Christ was subject to His parents. And Bernard (*Serm. 1 on the text “missus est”*) exclaims, “He was subject to them. Who? To whom? God to men, not only to Mary, but also to Joseph. On both sides an astounding thing! On both sides a marvel! both that God obeys a woman—humility without example! and that a woman rules over God—exaltation without a parallel! . . . Blush, proud dust and ashes (*cinis*)! God humbles Himself, and dost thou lift thyself up? . . . As often as I desire to rule over men so often do I strive to surpass my God.”

Christ wished to teach us by the whole of His early life, for thirty years without cessation, that the perfection of virtue, and especially of religious life, consists in obedience. He did and said many things in these thirty years, but S. Luke sums them all up in the sentence, “He was subject to them.” Glorious panegyric of a religious man! All His life He was obedient and subject to His superiors.

It is the opinion of the old writers that Christ assisted Joseph in his trade as a carpenter. For it was fitting that He, who, together with His true Father, is the Artificer of the Universe, should practise with His supposed father the trade of an artificer.

These scanty facts only does S. Luke recount of the youth of Christ until His thirtieth year; and during the whole of this time He lived privately and unknown. The statements from the apocryphal book, called “The Infancy of the Saviour,” and other books of the same kind, the Church rejects.

S. Justin (*Dial. contra Tryphonem*) says that Christ used to make ploughs, yokes, &c., and that for this reason He often took them as figures of speech in the Gospel, as, “Take My yoke upon you,” and “No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” Lyranus, Jansenius, Maldonatus, Dionysius the Carthusian, and John of Avila are of the same opinion, as also Cajetan, and Francis Lucas (on S. Mark vi. 3); but Paulus Burgensis, Baradius, and Simon de Cassia (book iv. ch. 3) deny that Christ worked as a carpenter, and hold that He lived a retired life like a religious until His thirtieth year, passing His time in prayer, contemplation, and fasting. To the objection that the Nazarenes, who were neighbours of Jesus, asked, “Is not this the carpenter?” they find an answer in S. Augustine (*De Cons. Evang.*, 1. ii. c. xlii.), “They thought Him a carpenter because He was a carpenter’s son,” S. Matt. xiii. 55. But since the Nazarenes saw Jesus every day, and studiously watched what He did, they seem likely to have called Him a carpenter from His occupation. Otherwise, indeed, had they seen Him idle, they would have taxed Him with idleness, for not succouring the poverty of His parents by His labour, and helping His father Joseph in his work.

Besides Christ wished by this labour to give an example to working-men. So S. Paul was a tent-maker, even when he preached, as appears from Acts xviii. 3.

But His mother kept all these sayings in her heart—that, in course of time, she might the more fully understand all that Christ should say and do, and also that she might impart them to S. Luke and the other Apostles, to be written or handed down to posterity. “For although,” says Titus, “she did not perfectly follow all that was said by Him, yet she understood them to be Divine things, and above human understanding. She heard Jesus, not as a child of twelve years, but received and heeded His words as those of a man perfect in every way.” Or, as Euthymius says, “as the words not merely of a child, but also of the Son of God.”

Ver. 52.—*And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.* For *stature* the Greek has *ἡλικία*, “age,” or “proficiency.” See also chap. xii. 25. Both renderings are true and apposite.

To the question whether Jesus really progressed in wisdom and grace, as He did in age and stature, S. Athanasius (*Serm. 4 Contra Arianos*) and S. Cyril (*Thesaurus*, l. x.) seem to answer in the affirmative; for they seem to say that the humanity of Christ drew greater wisdom from the Word by degrees, just as the Blessed Virgin and other men and women did.

But the rest of the fathers teach differently. For, from the first instant of His conception, Jesus was, as has been said at v. 40, full of wisdom and grace, this being due to that humanity on account of its hypostatic union with the Word. S. Gregory Nazianzen (*Orat. 20 in laudem Basilii*) says, “He