ROCZNIKI TEOLOGICZNE
Tom LII, zeszyt 1 – 2005

WALDEMAR RAKOCY CM

THE SENSE OF THE *LOGION* ABOUT THE SIGN OF JONAH IN THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST LUKE (11:29b-30)

In the text we pose a question what Jesus understands by the sign of Jonah in the Gospel according to St. Luke. Consequently, we are not occupied with the sign that was expected of Jesus by those who asked the question[1] The authors have different opinions about the sign of Jonah in Lk. In the past some thought that in his words Jesus meant John the Baptist[2] According to R. Bultmann[3], this sense does not fit in the contest; according to J. A. Fitzmyer[4], no source has confirmed the abbreviation of the name John whose form would remind the name of Jonah. Now the interpretations that

Dr hab. Waldemar RAKOCY CM, prof. KUL – kierownik Katedry Egzegezy Pism Apostolskich NT w INB KUL; adres do korespondencji: ul. Altanowa 5/11, 20-819 Lublin, e-mail: rakocyw@poczta.fm.

[1] The dominating opinion among scholars is that those who were asking expected some sign (miracle) that would confirm the heavenly mission of Jesus (see the more recent studies: G. M. L a n d e s, *Jonah in Luke: The Hebrew Bible Background to the Interpretation of the "Sign of Jonah" Pericope in Luke 11:29-32*, in: R. D. Weis – D. M. Carr, *A Gift of God in Due Season: Essays on Scripture and Commentary in Honour of J. A. Sanders*, JSOTSup, Sheffield 1996, p. 133-163, esp. 139; M. D. H o o k e r, *The Sign of a Prophet: The Prophetic Actions of Jesus*, London 1997, p. 18). The authors do not specify, however, what kind of a miracle they had in their minds. According to S. M. Bryan (*Jesus and Israel's Traditions of Judgement and Restoration*, SNTSMS 117, Cambridge 2002, p. 39-41) this was a request to repeat the works revealing the Divine power from the times of the exodus from Egypt and the conquest of Canaan, things that would confirm Jesus' words about the approaching fulfilling of times.

[2] E.g. C. M o x o n, *"To sēmeion Iōna"*, ExpT 22(1911), p. 566-567; J. H. M i c h a e l, *"The Sign of Jonah"*, JTS 21(1919-1920), p. 146-159.

[3] *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, Göttingen 1958, p. 124, par. 2.

[4] *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, AB 28A, New York 1985, p. 935.

appear most often point to Jesus' teaching/calling to repentance[5], to the person of (earthly) Jesus[6], to His Resurrection[7] and His declaration of the return to the trial[8] We shall refer to the above views further.

During the last decade there appeared some publications on the sign of Jonah, but from another point of view. A. Fuchs[9] deals with the history of the redaction of the pericope, whereas T. Pfrimmer[10] – the so-called practical theology. His interpretation of the pericope is closest to the sense of calling to repentance/conversion.

Defining the sense of the *logion* of Jesus in Luke 11:29b-30 demands first that several questions be solved with regard to the redaction of the text. This will help us then to answer the question posed in the title. Therefore we shall start from establishing whether the logion reaches to historical Jesus, or, perhaps, is a work of Christian tradition or of the author of the third Gospel.

1. THE REDACTION OF THE *LOGION*

We have two references to Jonah only in Matthew and Luke. Mark contains from the same tradition only the question about the sign (from heaven)

---

[5] T. W. M a n s o n, *The Sayings of Jesus as Recorded in the Gospels according to St. Matthew and St. Luke Arranged with Introduction and Commentary*, London 1949, p. 90-91; W. G r u n d m a n n, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, THNT 3, Berlin 1974, p. 242; S c h u l z, *Q, Die Spruchquelle der Evangelisten*, Zürich 1972, p. 256-257; F i t z m y e r, op. cit., p. 933; E. S c h w e i z e r, *The Good News according to Luke*, Atlanta 1984, p. 196; M. D. G o u l d e r, *Luke. A New Paradigm*, vol. 2, JSNTSup 20, Sheffield 1989, p. 512; P. G r e l o t, *Jésus de Nazareth: Christ et Seigneur*, Paris 1997, p. 292.

[6] K. H. R e n g s t o r f, *"Sēmeion"*, TDNT VII, p. 233-234.

[7] A. P l u m m e r, *The Gospel according to St. Luke*, ICC, Edinburgh 1900, p. 306-307; N. G e l d e n h u y s, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT, Grand Rapids 1988 [last edition], p. 334; M a r s h a l l, *Luke*, p. 485; S c h ü r m a n n, *Das Lukasevangelium*, vol. 2/1, HTKNT 3, Freiburg i. B. 1994; cf. J. B. G r e e n, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT, Grand Rapids (MI) – Cambridge (U.K.) 1997, p. 463, 464.

[8] B u l t m a n n, *Geschichte*, p. 124; V ö g l t e, *Das Evangelium und die Evangelien. Beiträge zur Evangelienforschung*, Düsseldorf 1971, p. 130-131, 135-136; F. G r y g l e w i c z, *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza. Wstęp – Przekład z oryginału – Komentarz* [The Gospel according to St. Luke. Introduction – Translation from the Original – Commentary], Poznań–Warszawa 1974, p. 228; J. E r n s t, *Il Evangelo secondo Luca*, vol. 2, Brescia 1990, p. 536 (trans. from the German original *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, Regensburg 1977); N o l l a n d, *Luke*, vol. 2, p. 653; B r y a n, *Traditions of Judgement and Restoration*, p. 41-44.

[9] *Das Zeichen des Jona*, StudNTUmwelt 19(1994), p. 131-160.

[10] *De l'interprétation en théologie pratique*, ËtudThéolRel 73(1998), p. 543-555.

and Jesus' answer that no sign will be given to this generation. In Matthew and Luke we have a second part of Jesus' words: "[...] *ei me to semeion Iona*"; this answer is regarded to be original[11] A question arises here why we cannot find these words in Mark: he had shortened the transmission of tradition?[12] This solution is suggested by the context of his Gospel, i.e. deeds and words of Jesus are signs in themselves, and some knowledge about the further part of the *logion* in Matthew and Luke. We cannot exclude, however, that the author of Mark knew a different version of the text. If we found out that he knew the transmission of tradition in Q[13], this would mean that he voluntarily had chosen that text without any mention about the sign of Jonah[14] The fact that Mark has taken over the tradition without the second part of the *logion* we consider to be equally likely as the abbreviation of the words of Jesus[15] Assuming that the author of Mark might have known source Q, we do not exclude that he had intentionally chosen the text without any reference to Jonah. The motives are unknown.

After the words, "except the sign of Jonah," the *logion* of Jesus sounds differently in Matthew and Luke. The former leaves no doubt as to the sense of the words: the analogy concerns only three days and three nights that Jonah spent in the belly of the whale, and Jesus in the heart of the earth (12:40). The latter words of Jesus state only, "Just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be a sign to this generation" (11:30). A question arises: which of the two versions of the words of Jesus was in Q? Does one of them goes back to Jesus at all? The answer is not easy in the case of Matthew's version: if the historical Jesus had worded the analogy found here, it would not have been removed from tradition (this is an extremely important issue, concerning an event of key importance for

---

[11] See e.g. B u l t m a n n, op. cit., p. 124, par. 1; V ö g t l e, *Das Evangelium*, p. 110, 134; S c h u l z, *Q*, p. 253-254.

[12] Thus e.g. B u l t m a n n, op. cit., p. 124, p. 1; J. N o l l a n d, *Luke*, vol. 2, WBC 55B, Dallas 1993, p. 651.

[13] We are not talking here about a relationship but only knowledge; it is not excluded (see about this matter, A. P a c i o r e k, *Q. The Galilean Gospel*, Lublin 2001, p. 104, n. 277).

[14] I.e. knowing even the abbreviated version of the text, he could have supplemented it from Q (despite some opinions to the contrary, we assume that there is a common source of Matt. and Luke).

[15] U. Luz (*Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, vol. 2, EKK, Zürich 1990, p. 275) and R. H. Gundry (*Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church Under Persecution*, Grand Rapids 1994, p. 243) allow for two independent and authentic traditions, both of which reflect various circumstances.

Christianity), either by Luke or Matthew (or before them). Therefore its author is Matthew. This is confirmed by a reference to the Bible, a thing typical of him, and a quotation of a respective part. Moreover, two examples cited in 12:41-42 (=Luke 11:31-32) do not accurately correspond to the contents of v. 40. The version of the text in Matthew is undoubtedly its later interpretation[16] This means that it was neither in Q, nor does it reach to the historical Jesus.

The redactional contribution of Matthew in 12:40 does not have to mean that Luke in a corresponding place faithfully renders the version of the text in Q. Some scholars claim that Luke 11:30 is a later addition[17], or even comes from the Evangelist:[18] it combines v. 29 with vv. 31-32. This position assumes that vv. 31-32 were not originally one text with the *logion* about the sign of Jonah. Now Schulz[19] maintains that vv. 29 and 30 were one text from the beginning. Considering a similarity of ideas in parallel places of Matthew and Luke, "Just as (*hosper gar/kathos gar*)... so will the Son of Man (*houtos estai (kai) ho hios tou anthropou*)..." proves its origin from Q: it is little likely that both authors and in the same place and in the same way developed the *logion* of Jesus. The same conclusion excludes that the *logion* was written from the beginning in Luke 11:30: the author of Luke had at most re-redacted it. This conclusion is in favour of an early relationship between the two examples (the queen of the south in Solomon and Jonah in Nineveh) with the *logion* about the sign of Jesus.

If the version in Matthew, the one that draws on resurrection, is his work, to what extent is Luke close to the version in Q? The redactional contribution of the author of Luke is clearly apparent in the introduction to the episode (v. 29a). Owing to the earlier question about the sign from heaven (v. 16), the Evangelist omits it in a parallel place to Matthew 12:38 and Mark 8:11[20] Furthermore, the plural number *ochloi* is typical of him[21], similarly

---

[16] See N o l l a n d, *Luke*, vol. 2, p. 651; also W. D. D a v i e s – D. C. A l l i s o n, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. 2, ICC, Edinburgh 1991, p. 352 and 356; D. A. H a g n e r, *Matthew*, vol. 1, WBC 33A, Dallas 1993, p. 354.

[17] V ö g l t e, *Evangelium*, p. 110.

[18] D. L ü h r m a n n, *Die Redaktion der Logienquelle*, WMANT 33, Neukirchen 1969, p. 41.

[19] *Q*, p. 252-253, 257.

[20] See more in: W. R a k o c y, *Obraz i funkcja faryzeuszy w dziele Łukaszowym (Łk-Dz). Studium literacko-teologiczne* [The Image and Function of Pharisees in the work of Luke (Luke-Acts). A Literary-Theological Study], Lublin 2000, p. 74-75.

[21] J. J e r e m i a s, *Die Sprache des Lukasevangeliums. Redaktion und Tradition im*

as the verb *archomai*[22] used there. It seems that the author of Luke could have done the same in the case of 11:30. We find there his typical *kathos*, *egeneto* and *kai*[23] The above terms do not prove that the *logion* had entirely been remade (stylistic alterations), for the construction of thought has been preserved, which – as we have proved – comes from the period prior to Luke (cf. Matt. 12:40). Therefore we have no grounds to exclude the compatibility of the *logion* in Luke 11:30 with Q: we agree that the version of Luke (the construction of thought and its sense) does not diverge to a considerable extent from Q. We cannot see clearly why this should change the sense of the *logion*[24]; one would have to explain why Matthew and Luke changed the sense of the text in Q in the same place.

The above conclusion refers to Q; it does not allow us, however, to state that also the words of Jesus had a form similar to those in Luke. We have not ultimately resolved whether Mark had shortened them or taken over such a version. If the latter case is true the longer version of the *logion* in Matthew and Luke may not have reached Jesus. It seems that if the version of the *logion* in Matthew and Luke, that referring to Jonah, had not come from Jesus (i.e. it was a development of His words in tradition), we would know only the interpretation that draws on His resurrection. The analogy between the three-day long event in the life of Jonah and Jesus would have dominated in the post-paschal community in every other sense. Therefore we maintain that the historical Jesus drew in His words on to Jonah (without referring to His resurrection[25]); thus Mk omitted this part of the *logion* or knew a different version. Now it is difficult to imagine that Jesus left his audience without explaining the sense of the sign of Jonah. This argues in favour of the authenticity of the further part of the *logion* ("Just as Jonah... so will the Son of Man...)[26] In that case we assume that Q contained the sense which Jesus conferred on His words (=Luke 11:29b-30).

Nicht-Markusstoff des dritten Evangeliums, Göttingen 1980, p. 104.

[22] In Luke – 31x; in Matt. – 13x.

[23] See M. D. G o u l d e r, *Luke. A New Paradigm*, vol. 2, JSNTSup 20, Sheffield 1989, p. 512.

[24] In the case of Matt. there is a clear reason: the conferral of a new meaning on the text which was of key importance for Christianity.

[25] We have proved it earlier.

[26] As to Luke 11:31-32 (=Matt. 12:41-42), we are not able to sort it out.

2. AN INTERPRETATION OF THE SENSE OF THE *LOGION*

The above analyses make us pose a question: why did the author of Luke or the tradition he had received fail to perceive in the sign of Jonah a reference to the resurrection of Jesus, such that we have in Matthew? The analogy between the stay of Jonah in the fish and of Jesus in the heart of the earth imposes itself automatically[27] One should think that *another interpretation of the sign of Jonah was deeply rooted in tradition, an interpretation that excluded the one that drew to the resurrection of Jesus*; only a very clear sense of the words of Jesus did protect the *logion* (until the time when the version of Matthew was written) before the above analogy. This will be a subject matter of further analyses.

a) *The Logion (vv. 29b-30)*

If we want to solve this problem, we should decide whether through the sign of Jonah we understand a sign made by the prophet, or his person that was a sign for the inhabitants of Nineveh. The first part of Jesus' words clearly rules out any sign in the sense of the addressees, or an extraordinary event that was supposed to persuade them. This generation is perverse and does not deserve a sign. An interpretation that it will not receive any sign, *except* this one, does not seem to be correct. "*Ei me...*" (v. 11:29c) points to an alternative: instead of the sign they are awaiting, they will receive something other, i.e. not what they are expecting (for they do not deserve it)[28] The formulation in 11:29c-30 rules out the first sense and clearly points to the second one; otherwise, Jesus Himself would be the One to make a sign which He decisively leaves out of consideration. This means that we have to seek the sense of the sign of Jonah in the prophet's activity. The inhabitants of Nineveh knew it, because it became a sign for them.

What Jonah made and what was well known for the Ninevites is brought home to us in the Book of Jonah. Jonah does not speak to the inhabitants of Nineveh about his stay in the fish, but only announces the judgement of God (3:4). Looking at this from the angle of the inhabitants of Nineveh, they were

---

[27] According to A. Schlatter (*Das Evangelium des Lukas. Aus seinem Quellen erklärt*, Stuttgart 1931, p. 515) it seems impossible that the pre-Lukean tradition or Luke himself should not have thought about the miraculous escape of Jonah.

[28] Therefore it will not be, as Bryan claims (*Traditions of Judgement and Restoration*, p. 39-41), any miraculous action of God, the one that the Israelites experienced in the past.

converted in result of Jonah's calling, and not because he had been inside the fish. The authors who advocate the sense of resurrection in Luke 11:29b-30, as Marshall[29] does, pinpoint that what is meant here is not what the prophet speaks about the Book in Nineveh, but the image of Jonah in the awareness of Jesus' audience. This way of understanding the sign of Jonah is permissible in the case of historical addressees of Jesus, or historical or present recipients of Luke; it is, however, methodologically inaccurate with regard to the method of the history of redaction, when it means the sense which the words of Jesus bear in Luke. This is not what His historical listeners or the addressees of the third Gospel understood. One should quote here the earlier argument: a study of the redaction of the *logion* in Matthew and Luke is an evidence that the interpretation in the sense of resurrection is the work of Matthew and does not come from Jesus.

The *logion* states that "this generation" will receive something other than what it is expecting. This something else may theoretically be the resurrection of Jesus. The title "Son of Man" used by Jesus refers basically to His earthly mission. In the context of resurrection (and elevation) appears in Luke 22:69, parousia – v. 21:25-27. The announcements of passion present Jesus as earthly Jesus, the One who has to suffer and be raised from the dead[30] The reference to this title does not rule it out, neither does it prove it. Other arguments become necessary.

The past tense appears twice in the *logion*: "[...] none will be given them (*ou dothesetai*)..." (v. 29b) and "[...] so will the Son of Man be (*estai*)..." (v. 30b). The advocates of the interpretation in the sense of resurrection/return to the judge refer to both tenses as being evidences of their thesis. The future tense, however, may equally point to another earlier event. We do not have to deal with the real future tense. When people demanded a sign from Jesus, He said that none would be given. Rather, it is a logical future tense: the request of the sign is confronted with an answer referring to the future in which it would be carried out[31]

---

[29] *Luke*, p. 485.

[30] One can quote the text of Luke 16:30-31 as contrary to the understanding of the sing of Jonah in the sense of resurrection. In this text the raising from the dead is excluded as a sign that may change the attitude of the unbelievers. At the same time, what is proposed here is the teaching contained in the Scriptures. An exceptional significance of the text consists in its origin from Luke. Despite this, the analogy is not precise: we cannot put at the same level the resurrection of Jesus and the return to life (appearing) of someone from the dead.

[31] The future tense cannot be avoided also in modern languages, as e.g. the Polish language: "Żaden znak nie będzie dany" [No sign will be given (not: is not)].

In the second part of the words of Jesus: "[...] so will the Son of Man be a sign for this generation", the author of Luke could use the present tense of "is" Does the "will be" assume unconditionally an event that is supposed to take place? The present tense in this sentence may be dictated by the future tense of the earlier sentence. The very construction of the *logion* in 11:30 (cf. Matt. 12:40) that we have deemed as coming from Q (and most probably reaching back to the historical Jesus) is a translation of Aramaic words in which the verb "to be" is not used. Thus the second part of the words reads as follows: "[...] so (will) the Son of Man [...] for this generation" – in the sense now or/and in the future. Therefore there is no way to justify the interpretation based on *estai*, i.e. that we deal here only with something that has not taken place yet, and that will occur in the future. "It will be" in 11:30b is one of two possible sense in the Aramaic language: it may mean real future tense, but in no way does it exclude something that is already present (and what will still take place) – like in the Greek language.

One can quote the following understanding that is contrary to interpreting the sign of Jonah in Luke as the resurrection of Jesus: if the words of Jesus (or only the *logion* in tradition) had actually drawn to resurrection, this truth would have been clearly expressed (like in Matthew) due to its significance – and this in the origins of tradition (see point 1).

b) *Two Biblical Examples (vv. 31-32)*

Explaining further the sense of the sign of Jonah in Luke, we shall refer to two examples quoted after the *logion* of Jesus (11:31-32). The relationship suggested earlier with the vv. 29b-30[32] justifies that they can be used in this place. Both images illustrate the *logion*, nevertheless one should be careful: even though they shed light on the *logion*, one should find out which aspect is considered here. Quoting first an episode from the life of Solomon (not Jonah!) gives us to understand that the *logion* in vv. 29b-30 has the same relationship with each of the two examples. Since they are two equal examples, therefore they must contain the same sense.

Both examples in Luke and Matthew announce a judgement on "this generation" The task of vv. 31-32 is not to doom (it does not yet take place – if it comes about, then at the judgement!), but its announcement. The reason of a possible damnation is that this generation shows no attitude of the kind adopted by the Queen of the South and the inhabitants of Nineveh: the Queen

[32] At least at the stage of the redaction of the text in Q.

came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wise (*sophia*) preaching, others repented in result of calling (*kerygma*)[33] The announcement/warning against the looming threat of condemnation aimed at "this generation" constitutes the main goal and topic of examples. It follows from the fact of reference to two examples from the biblical story that there is an analogy between them and the situation of Jesus.

The words: "and there is something greater than Solomon [...] than Jonah here" (pointing at the Son of Man) allow us to find the main analogy between vv. 29b-30 and 31-32: it is made up of the *persons* of Jesus, Solomon, and Jonah. They are present in relation to "this generation" (Jesus), the queen of the south (Solomon) and the Ninevites (Jonah). A model of a bilateral relationship is drawn here: teaching – its rejection/acceptation. The analogy between Jesus and Solomon/Jonah deals with the character of their activity (they have become a sign for others), and does not result from their mission, for it is different (rejection/acceptation)[34]. This analogy allows us to explain in 11:29b-30 the relationship between Jesus and Jonah: in the explanation of the sense of the *logion* the wisdom of Solomon is more important in the examples than the arrival of the queen of the south. The teaching of Jonah is more important than the repentance of the Ninevites[35] Now we can state that the announcement of the judgement on "this generation" in both examples does not illustrate the *logion* in 11:29b-30, but reveals consequences of adopting a different attitude than the one of the queen of the south and the Ninevites.

Had the author of Luke intended the sense of the resurrection of Jesus in vv. 29b-30, he would have reverted the succession of the above examples, as it takes place in Matthew[36]. What is more, with this sense of the *logion* only

---

[33] Relying only on the grounds of Jon, the Book does not say that the prophet called to repentance, but only announced the Judgement of God and destruction of the town (3:4). The conversion of Nineveh and God's pity on the inhabitants evoked in Jonah indignation (4:1). This thread of the story is not voiced in Luke or Matt. (*kērygma* with the article is a Christian interpretation of the history of Jonah and a starting point for the explanation of the sense of the logion in Lk).

[34] We do not agree with those scholars who interpret the rejection of the mission of Jesus as a contradiction of the above analogy, hence the announcement of the judgement in the examples. Now any attempts made to find other, minute similarities and differences goes away from the goal of the two examples which shed light on the main idea.

[35] Wisdom underlined in the first example was a specific difference of Solomon, thus the teaching of Jonah emphasised in the second example similarly constitutes the main characteristic of his activity.

[36] Such authors as e.g. Bultmann (*Geschichte*, p. 118), Marshall (*Luke*, p. 486), or C. F.

the example of the Ninevites would be justified. One can see no idea of resurrection in the episode of the queen of the south in Solomon. Marshall's reference[37] to the verb *egeiro* with the preposition *meta* in 11:31a, as a counterpart of the Hebrew *qûm 'im*, presuming the raising from the dead of the queen of the south and thereby introducing this idea, is an overstatement the text. Firstly, it should be used rather in the example with the Ninevites – in their case there appears the verb *anistemi*, which may likewise express this idea. Both Greek verbs occur, however, in the same chapter (v. 8) in the parable about the persistent friend, where they denote getting up at night. Secondly, what relationship there would be in Jesus' words to refer to the resurrection of the accusers of "this generation" to the sign that will be given in His resurrection? These are only verbal analogies. The words express only the idea of raising in order to speak (a side topic in the example).

If we removed the first example and left only the second one, then even reference to the Ninevites would not well illustrate the sense of resurrection in the *logion*. What influenced the change of their attitude was the teaching/calling (*to kerygma*) of Jonah[38]; the reference to the raising at the day of judgement repeated here is a side topic.

Two possibilities remain: 1) both examples fit the *logion* about the sign of Jonah, on condition that we do not take it in the sense of the resurrection of Jesus, 2) if, however, it contains the same sense as in Matthew, they do not illustrate the words of Jesus, but merely accusation and harbinger of damnation at the judgement. Now the second possibility does not explain at all the reference to the wisdom of Solomon or to the calling of Jonah, and these – as we have seen – constitute the main analogy with the *logion*.

Summing up a) and b)

We may conclude that with regard to various interpretations of the sense of the sign of Jonah in Luke mentioned at the beginning the least justifiable (in the context of two examples) is the reference to the resurrection of Jesus. The announcement of the judgement/return for the judgement does not stand in a clear contradiction (the topic of judgement over "this generation"), but

---

Evans (*Saint Luke*, TPINTC, London–Philadelphia 1990, p. 498) take the succession in Luke to be the primary one: the chronological order is more natural. See a different opinion in N o l l a n d, *Luke*, vol. 2, p. 650-651.

[37] Op. cit., p. 486.

[38] The article used here points to a concrete teaching, and this we know only from Jon.

does not make the main analogy. Now the interpretation that points to the person of Jesus is likely to be accepted (reference to words and deeds encompasses a broader range than the activity of Solomon or Jonah); the largest likelihood, however, is in the teaching/calling to repentance, since the attitude of the queen of the south and that of the Ninevites, put forward as a model, was an answer to the above calling.

c) *the Book of Jonah*

Should we rule out the sense of resurrection from the *logion* about the sign of Jonah in Q (including the words of Jesus), we have to answer the following question: why did the historical Jesus refer to Jonah, and not e.g. to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, or any other prophet? The fact that this kind of choice was supported by later tradition means that the sense of the words of Jesus was clear. Rabbinical tradition, later than Luke, saw in Jonah an example of offering oneself for Israel[39] Rabbi Jonathan deduced such a sense from the words of the prophet: "Pick me up and throw me into the sea [...]" (Jon 1:12). At a first glance this analogy is very interesting, but the further part of the verse reads that it is the prophet "offering himself" that is guilty. Evans[40] suggests that the choice of Jonah resulted from the message he had received from God (Jon 3:2). We deem it the right direction to solve this issue.

One should refer to the Book of Jonah. Jonah is presented there by his mission from its beginning directed to the people who had turned away from God, comitting all kinds of iniquities (1:2), and to whom God wants to show His forgiveness and save from perdition (3:2.10; 4:11)[41] We notice here two elements of this presentation: 1) going to those who have turned away from God is the main aspect of Jonah's mission, 2) its purpose is, as God wills it, the sinner in general. Jonah comes to a foreign country (4:2a), but nowhere in the Book are the inhabitants of Nineveh called pagans, nor is this term used at all. The mission of Jonah is designed to rebuke sinners, not pagans[42]. Ni-

---

[39] H. L. S t r a c k – P. B i l l e r b e c k, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, vol. 1, München 1922, p. 643 f.

[40] *Luke*, p. 499.

[41] Although the prophet does not fully understand his mission (he is angry that God should spare Nineveh), its purpose was to save the city from God's anger.

[42] To understand the mission of Jonah in Luke as directed to pagans cannot come to terms with the words of Jesus. Namely, that the Son of Man will be a sign for this generation: the author of Luke almost on purpose fails to emphasise the mission of Jesus among pagans (he omits the episode with the Syrophoenician woman (Mk 7:24-30) and does not mention Fillipian Cesarea (9:18). Ultimately, the title the Son of Man is above all connected with the earthly

neveh is presented as the great and corrupt city (3:3; 4:11). It symbolises those who have turned away from God[43]

The mission of Jonah, as presented in the Book, is analogous with the mission of Jesus whose main purpose in the Gospels was to call sinners to repentance: "For the Son of Man has come to seek and save what was lost" (Lk 19:10; cf. Matt 18:11)[44]; moreover, "the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" (v. 24). The mission of Jesus as preaching God's forgiveness is characterised in Luke by such pericopes (belonging to L) as the paradigm about the lost drachma (15:8-10)[45], about the prodigal son (vv. 11-32), or the story of the tax collector Zacchaeus (19:1-10). In no other prophet can we find similar coincidences: the presentation of a mission as directed to sinners in general, and whose purpose is at the same time the forgiveness of God[46]. Maybe in accordance with this the author of Lk does not stress, as Matt does, the order of Jesus to proclaim only to Jews[47]

We arrive at a conclusion that the activity of Jonah corresponds mainly with the mission of Jesus. The example of Jonah in Luke may mean the mission of Jesus addressed to sinners: God sent Jonah to sinners with a mission, he became a sign of Divine love (forgiveness) towards them – and similarly the Son of Man. The mission of Jesus is for sinners ("of this generation" whose asking for a sign) a sign of Divine love (forgiveness). The above sense of the logion most clearly characterises the activity of Jesus on earth. It was addressed to sinners: "Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do" (Luke 5:31 and parallel).

The two examples following the *logion* bring about the topic of consequences that result from the rejection of the above mission of Jesus. The

---

activity of Jesus (see earlier).

[43] Cf. D. Stuart, *Hosea – Jonah*, WBC 11, Waco 1987, p. 486 ff.; 506 ff.

[44] The first words of Jesus in Mk and Matt, that is calling to repentance (1:15; 4:17), should be treated as a clear analogy – no such parallel in Lk (instead, we find here a scene at the synagogue in Nazareth).

[45] With a clear reference in v. 10 to repentance of sinners.

[46] The missions of the remaining prophets were directed above all to the (unfaithful) Israel; if they concerned other nations, then they anticipated mainly the judgement of God. Thereby the choice of Jonah was dictated (in the first place) by the prophetic character of the mission of Jesus (see on Jesus the Prophet in Lk: F. O'Fearghail, *The Introduction to Luke-Acts. A Study of the Role of Lk 1:1-4, 44 in the Composition of Luke's Two-Volume Work*, AnBib 126, Rome 1991, p. 135-136). This means that Jesus could have referred to some other figures than prophets. If He did not do that, then most likely because among other figures of the OT we shall not find a similar analogy.

[47] Cf. Matt 10:5 and Lk 9:1-2; 10:3-12.

significance of the threatening damnation in Luke is emphasised by the two-fold *logion* of Jesus in Luke in which He refers to sinners: "By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did" (13:3 and 5). The *logion* accurately illustrates the situation of "this generation" in 11:31-32: condemnation is a threatening reality (not the present one!): now a possibility of repentance is preached[48]

The suggested sense of the *logion* about the sign of Jonah deals with the basic task of Jesus during His earthly mission, i.e. the calling of sinners to repentance in order to save them from the coming judgement of God. It describes the sense of calling to repentance/conversion in the way suggested by scholars, but the novelty of this study consists in justifying this interpretation by pointing to the main analogy between the two examples and the mission of Jonah and Jesus.

The verb *estai* used in Luke (and Q) includes the realisation of this calling already at the moment at which these words are spoken in Luke, and in further narration. Thus defined sense of the *logion*, referring to the essence of the earthly mission of Jesus, protected it against an interpretation that would draw on to His resurrection. The latter sense was born at a later stage of tradition (Matthew)[49] It clearly follows from what we have said so far that "this generation" will not receive anything more than what has been given to it (in accordance with Jesus' categorical refusal to give any sign)[50]

---

[48] The topic characterising the work of Luke (see R a k o c y, *Obraz i funkcja faryzeuszy* [The Image and Function of Pharisees], p. 240).

[49] Probably, it betrays the background of the heated discussion between Christianity and Judaism after the schism with the Jewish synagogue ("their scribes" or "their/your synagogues": 7:29; 9:35; 23:4) in which the argument on behalf of the resurrection of Jesus was for the Judeo-Christian addressees of the Gospel more important than stressing the essence of Jesus' mission.

[50] The above interpretation reveals other consequences in Matthew and Luke that the sign of Jonah has been refuted by "this generation." According to Matthew, it means that it will not be persuaded by the raising from the dead of Jesus, or, according to Luke, His calling to repentance during the earthly mission. Thus it is implicitly excluded in Matthew to believe in Jesus in the post-paschal period; in Luke it is excluded to believe in Jesus only during His earthly mission – the resurrection of Jesus may fulfil such function towards "this generation" (we are interested in the level of the redaction of the Gospel, or the theological idea of the author – not its historical dimension!).

REFERENCES

B u l t m a n n R., Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition, Göttingen 1958.
H o o k e r M. D., The Sign of a Prophet: The Prophetic Actions of Jesus, London 1997.
L a n d e s G. M., Jonah in Luke: The Hebrew Bible Background to the Interpretation of the "Sign of Jonah" Pericope in Luke 11:29-32, in: R. D. Weis – D. M. Carr, A Gift of God in Due Season: Essays on Scripture and Commentary in Honour of J. A. Sanders, JSOTSup, Sheffield 1996, p. 133-163.
M a n s o n T. W., The Sayings of Jesus as Recorded in the Gospels according to St. Mathew and St. Luke Arranged with Introduction and Commentary, London 1949.
M i c h a e l J. H., "The Sign of Jonah", JTS 21(1919-1920), p. 146-159.
M o x o n C., "To sēmeion Iōna", ExpT 22(1911), p. 566-567.
R e n g s t o r f K. H., "Sēmeion", TDNT VII, p. 233-234.
S c h u l z S., Q. Die Spruchquelle der Evangelisten, Zürich 1972.
V ö g l e A., Das Evangelium und die Evangelien. Beiträge zur Evangelienforschung, Düsseldorf 1971.

SENS LOGIONU O ZNAKU JONASZA W EWANGELII ŁUKASZOWEJ

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Mt i Łk podają różne wersje przekazu o znaku Jonasza. Mateuszowe odwołanie do zmartwychwstania Jezusa uznaje się za wtórną interpretację logionu. Sens wersji Łukaszowej sięga Q i najprawdopodobniej historycznego Jezusa. Autor podaje kilka argumentów wykluczających interpretację rezurekcyjną w Łk. Z pozostałych interpretacji znaku Jonasza – proponowanych przez autorów – najbardziej uzasadniona dotyczy nauczania/nawoływania do pokuty. Wybór Jonasza, a nie innego proroka, był podyktowany charakterem jego misji skierowanej do grzeszników, którym Bóg pragnie okazać przebaczenie (nie trzydniowym przebywaniem we wnętrzu ryby). Wzywanie przez Jezusa grzeszników do nawrócenia stanowi – jak w przypadku Jonasza – podstawowy cel Jego misji. Tylko takie zrozumienie znaku Jonasza przez pierwszych chrześcijan (odwołujące się do istoty misji Jezusa) było w stanie uchronić logion do czasu wersji Mt przed zinterpretowaniem go w sensie Jego zmartwychwstania (kluczowe wydarzenie dla chrześcijaństwa). W późniejszej tradycji przeważa już zdecydowanie sens zmartwychwstania.

Streścił Waldemar Rakocy CM

Key words: Sign of Jonah, Jesus' mission, the Gospel according to Luke.

Słowa kluczowe: Znak Jonasza, posłannictwo Jezusa, Ewangelia Łukasza.