

The Exegetical Significance of Cataphoric Pronouns in Luke's Gospel

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Presented at the Evangelical Theological Society's
Northwest Regional Meeting
February 24, 2007

Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is to describe Luke's use of demonstrative pronouns to refer to propositions which have not yet been introduced into the discourse. This is typically referred to as 'cataphoric' reference by linguists. More specifically, it will be argued that Luke's cataphoric use of demonstratives to refer to new propositions functions as a highlighting device. The highlighting of these propositions serves to add prominence to them that they would not otherwise have received.

Introduction

Pronouns are most often conceived of as a shorter substitute for some kind of noun phrase. For instance in Luke 3:2 where 'John, the son of Zechariah' begins his ministry, Luke does not use this complex noun phrase for each subsequent reference to him. Instead, he relies upon the inflection of verb forms (e.g. 3:3a, 7a), or the use of personal pronouns (e.g. αὐτοῦ in v. 7) as substitutes for the full noun phrase reference. In both of these cases, the reader refers back to the preceding context to determine the most likely referent of the pronoun. This referent is typically referred to as the *antecedent*, or *anaphoric* reference.

There is also a special class of pronouns called demonstratives, such as *this* and *that* in English, or οὗτος and ἐκεῖνος in Koine Greek. Demonstrative pronouns have the unique capability of standing in for whole propositions, and not just simple NPs.¹ For example in Luke 4:43 we find the demonstrative οὗτος used to refer back to a proposition from the preceding clause. People were trying to get Jesus to stay and continue ministering, but Jesus counters this by stating,

καὶ ταῖς ἑτέραις πόλεσιν εὐαγγελίσασθαι με δεῖ τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ὅτι ἐπὶ **τοῦτο** ἀπεστάλην.

"In other cities it is necessary for me to preach the kingdom of God, because for **this thing** I was sent."

The demonstrative pronoun τοῦτο refers back to the proposition 'preach the kingdom of God in other cities'. Adverbs like *such* or *thus* in English, or οὕτως in Greek share the same quality of demonstratives in that they may also refer to entire propositions. Use of demonstrative adverbs is

¹ For a cross-linguistic description of demonstrative pronouns, cf. Gundel et al. (2004). For linguistic description of their use in the Greek NT, cf. Porter (1992:128-29, 134-135) and Levinsohn (2003).

generally associated with describing the manner in which some action is done by referring back to an earlier proposition. For example, in Luke 12:27 Jesus describes how splendidly God clothes the flowers of the field by comparing them to Solomon’s glory. Then in v. 28, Jesus uses the preceding illustration to describe the manner in which the Father attends to our physical needs by stating,

εἰ δὲ... ὁ θεὸς οὕτως ἀμφιέζει
“If God **thus** clothes them...” or “If God **in this way** clothes them...”

The same technique is used by Paul in Gal. 6:2:

Ἀλλήλων τὰ βάρη βαστάζετε καὶ οὕτως ἀναπληρώσετε τὸν νόμον τοῦ Χριστοῦ.
“Bear one another’s burdens, and **thus** (οὕτως) you will fulfill the law of Christ”.

These examples illustrate that demonstrative pronouns and adverbs have the ability to stand in for entire propositions. In the same way that pronouns can act as substitutes for full NPs, demonstratives can function as substitutes for entire propositions.

As stated earlier, pronouns are most often associated with *anaphoric* reference, referring *back* to some antecedent in the preceding discourse. However, one often finds demonstratives used to point *ahead* to something. In other words, the demonstrative *cataphorically* refers to a referent that has yet to be introduced. This has been referred to as the *appositional* use of demonstratives by A. T. Robertson (1934:698), or as *proleptic* use by Wallace (1999, 2002:318). Though grammarians note the existence of this device, little indication is given as to its function within the overall discourse.

So why would you want to refer to a proposition using a demonstrative *before* it has been introduced into the discourse? I propose that the cataphoric use of demonstratives is purposefully used as a highlighting device. The cataphoric reference to the proposition adds anticipation and prominence to it that it would not otherwise have received. Believe it or not, we use this device quite a bit in colloquial English. Let’s begin with a few English examples to better understand this concept before moving on to Luke’s usage in Greek.

We have lots of different ways to highlight something important is about to be stated in a discourse. The typical means we use to cataphorically highlight a proposition is to insert an extraneous clause or question just before the important proposition. Think carefully about the contexts in which you might hear these statements:

- Get **this**!
- Listen to **this**!
- Guess **what**!
- You know **what**?
- Alright, **here’s** the deal!
- **This** is my final offer...
- Let me level with you.
- If you want to know the truth...

None of these statements are necessary to understand the proposition that follows. ‘Get this’ and ‘Listen to this’ are typically used just before some surprising or important announcement. The

same is true for the rhetorical questions ‘Guess what’ and ‘You know what’. The speaker is likely not expecting an answer. ‘Here’s the deal’ and ‘This is my final offer’ are often used in sales negotiations to announce the next proposal. The final two are variations of the same device, only without demonstratives. The simple point that I want to make is that each of these constructions function as an attention getter. Speakers use them to pique your curiosity.

Transitioning back to Greek, I would argue that the cataphoric use of demonstratives in the New Testament serves a comparable highlighting function to the English idioms just mentioned. Here are some examples from the Greek NT. Consider the uses of demonstratives in 1 John 4:8-10:

*“The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹By **this** (ἐν τούτῳ) the love of God was manifested in us, **that** (ὅτι) **God has sent His only begotten Son into the world** so that we might live through Him.*

*¹⁰In **this** (ἐν τούτῳ) is love, **not that** (ὅτι) **we loved God**, but **that** (ὅτι) **He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins**” (NASB).*

Here we have two cataphoric demonstratives referring to propositions. The first highlights the manner in which God loves us, the second highlights John’s definition of love. Both of the highlighted propositions are contained or resolved in subordinate ὅτι clauses. John could have just as easily stated that God’s love was manifested to us by Him sending his Son. Alternatively, he could have stated that God’s act of sending His Son manifested His love for us. Instead, he chose to highlight each of these propositions by using a cataphoric demonstrative. The resulting effect is to add prominence to them that they would not otherwise have received. This added prominence is an indicator of the importance of these propositions to the context of 1 John 4.

Here are the things to keep in mind about demonstratives. First, they have the unique grammatical ability to replace whole propositions, and not just noun phrases. Second, they are not always used to refer *back* to something anaphorically. They are also used to refer ahead *cataphorically* to something that has not yet been introduced into the discourse. I propose that the cataphoric use of demonstratives is intended by the writer to highlight the not-yet-introduced element. In other words, use of this construction adds prominence to the proposition that it would not otherwise have received. Furthermore, these propositions have been intentionally highlighted by the writer because of their significance to the overall meaning of the passage.

I will present the examples from Luke based on the syntactic means used to mark the resolution of the cataphoric reference. The first examples all use a subordinate conjunction (e.g. ἵνα, ὅτι). The second group uses simple apposition. The third group simply relies upon the semantics of the context.

Luke 10:11 and 20

The first two examples we will look at are found in Luke 10, where Jesus sends out the Seventy on a ministry trip. Jesus instructs them how to conduct themselves, as well as what to expect from those they meet. In v. 10, He describes what they should do if a city is unwilling to receive them: “But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off *in protest* against you” (NASB). He then uses a cataphoric demonstrative to make a declaration in v. 11:

πλὴν **τοῦτο** γινώσκετε
ὅτι ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ.

Only **this** know:
that has come near the kingdom of God.’

Jesus uses the demonstrative ‘this’ to highlight what the people are to know, namely that the kingdom of God is near. He could have simply told them that the kingdom was near, but use of the cataphoric demonstrative adds prominence the declaration would not otherwise have received.²

The second cataphoric demonstrative is found in v. 20, where the 70 disciples return and give their report. It is noteworthy that Luke only mentions one aspect of their report to Jesus, found in v. 17b: “**even the demons** submitted to us in your name”. Jesus responds by first describing all that He has given them authority over. But then He tempers this statement by making the following statement:

πλὴν ἐν **τούτῳ** μὴ χαίρετε ,
ὅτι τὰ πνεύματα ὑμῶν ὑποτάσσεται,
χαίρετε δὲ ὅτι τὰ ὀνόματα ὑμῶν
ἐγγέγραπται ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

Only in **this** do not rejoice:
that the spirits to you submit.
Rejoice instead that your names
have been written in the heavens.

Of all the things that the Seventy have learned on their journey, Jesus only focuses on one thing. This one thing is highlighted through the use of a cataphoric demonstrative. Though the Seventy have been given great authority, they are adjured essentially not to let it go to their heads. Jesus’ exhortation here is echoed in Luke 22:24 ff where the disciples are told to use their authority to be a greater servant, not to lord it over others. Note that only the negative statement utilizes a cataphoric demonstrative. The positive statement to rejoice communicates largely the same content, but without using the cataphoric demonstrative. This contrasts the two options available to Luke since both are used in the same passage.

² In v. 12, Jesus describes the consequences for the city that rejects the message of the Seventy. This pronouncement is separated from the declaration of v. 11 by a redundant quotative frame (i.e. ‘I say to you...’). This quotative frame is redundant because there has been no change of speakers. It is attributed to Jesus, not Luke, and serves a very specific purpose: to highlight the point follows. This point is that Sodom and Gomorrah will have a more tolerable time, if that is possible, during the final judgment than those cities that reject the 70 disciples.

Luke 12:39

The next cataphoric example is found in Luke 12:39 where Jesus is teaching about the need to be ready for His return. Jesus likens it to servants attentively waiting for their master's late-night return from a feast. The servants who are attentively keeping watch will be blessed. In verse 39 Jesus illustrates the necessity of watchfulness by comparing it to crime-prevention. He states,

τοῦτο δὲ γινώσκετε
ὅτι εἰ ᾗδει ὁ οἰκοδεσπότης ποία ὥρα ὁ
κλέπτης ἔρχεται, οὐκ ἂν ἀφήκεν
διορυχθῆναι τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ.

But **this** know:
**That if the master had known at what hour
the thief comes, he would not have allowed
his house to be broken into.**

The proposition highlighted here is the interpretive point of Jesus' illustration. I am arguing that Jesus intentionally uses this device to make sure the reader or hearer does not miss His point. His point is that unfortunately thieves do not make appointments. Instead they try to show up when you least expect and are least prepared. The cataphoric pronoun used here in the phrase "know this" functions similarly to a coach highlighting something important for his players: 'Alright, listen up!' or 'Here's the deal'. Jesus, like a good coach, uses an attention-getter to make sure the guys don't miss His point.

Luke 19:31

The next example of a cataphoric pronoun is found in Luke 19:31 where preparation is being made for Jesus' triumphal entry. As Jesus and the disciples are nearing Bethphage and Bethany, He tells two of his disciples to enter the village and bring Him a specific colt on which no one has ever ridden. They are not to ask permission, but are to simply take it. Jesus then says,

καὶ ἐάν τις ὑμᾶς ἐρωτᾷ· διὰ τί λύετε;
οὕτως ἐρεῖτε·
ὅτι ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ χρειᾶν ἔχει.

And if one should ask you, "Why are you untying?"
thus you will say,
"The Lord has need of it."

Here we see a demonstrative adverb used to highlight the reply the disciples are to give. This reply is introduced by the subordinate conjunction ὅτι. Jesus could just as easily have told the disciples what to answer without the cataphoric use of a demonstrative: "If someone should ask, tell them that the Lord has need of it". Instead, he adds prominence to the statement by referring to it first using the demonstrative. The point of this exercise is for the disciples to see that obeying Jesus' commands is the key to success in their endeavor. The answer that the disciples are to give also uses marked word order to highlight **the Lord** as the one that needs the colt. Maybe this is where the "God told me to do it" defense first came from.

Luke 24:44 (and 46)

Another example of cataphoric usage resolved by a subordinate clause is found in Luke 24:44, where the resurrected Jesus appears to His disciples. In order to address the disciples' amazement and disbelief, Jesus reminds them that all the things that He had predicted would happen to him were intended to fulfill the prophecies foretold in Scripture. He states,

οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι μου οὓς ἐλάλησα πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἔτι
ὧν σὺν ὑμῖν,
ὅτι δεῖ πληρωθῆναι πάντα τὰ γεγραμμένα ἐν
τῷ νόμῳ Μωϋσέως καὶ τοῖς προφήταις καὶ
ψαλμοῖς περὶ ἐμοῦ.

“These are my words which I spoke to you when with you, **that it is necessary to be fulfilled all the things written in the law of Moses and in the Prophets and in the Psalms concerning me.”**

Once again, Jesus cataphorically uses a demonstrative to highlight a statement that is important in the context. In this context, Jesus is trying to convince the disciples that it is really Him, and that all that has happened was part of God's bigger plan. This statement is followed in v. 45 by a narrative comment that Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, followed by a quotative frame to reintroduce Jesus' next statement. His first comment in v. 44 made reference to fulfilling what was foretold in Scripture. However, He gave no specifics about exactly what was fulfilled. Verse 46 provides the specifics, and this information is also highlighted through the cataphoric use of οὕτως:

καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὅτι
οὕτως γέγραπται
παθεῖν τὸν χριστὸν καὶ ἀναστῆναι ἐκ
νεκρῶν τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ,

And he said to them,
“Thus it has been written **to suffer the Christ and to rise from the dead on the third day.**

Marshall (1978:905) notes that most translations render οὕτως as cataphoric rather than anaphoric. Understood in this way, the adverb functions to highlight the information to which it refers, viz. the prophecies that Jesus has fulfilled. Jesus' sayings of vv. 44 and 46 are crucial to the overall meaning of the passage. Understanding both of them as being cataphorically highlighted provides both a balance to the passage. It is also consistent with the content of the passage. However, since the resolution of the cataphoric reference does not use a subordinate marker, the usage in v. 46 is open to interpretation.

Luke 6:3-4

There is one final example of cataphoric usage resolved using a subordinate conjunction, in this case using ὥς instead of ὅτι. This is the passage where the Pharisees question Jesus about the propriety of gleaning grain on the Sabbath. To address their question, Jesus cites an instance from the OT where David satisfied the hunger of him and those with him by taking the bread of the presence. Instead of simply citing the information, He gives it a prominent introduction, stating,

³ οὐδὲ τοῦτο ἀνέγνωτε ὃ ἐποίησεν Δαυὶδ ὅτε ἐπείνασεν αὐτὸς καὶ οἱ μετ' αὐτοῦ [ὄντες],
⁴[ὡς] εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοὺς ἄρτους τῆς προθέσεως λαβὼν ἔφαγεν καὶ ἔδωκεν τοῖς μετ' αὐτοῦ, οὓς οὐκ ἔξεστιν φαγεῖν εἰ μὴ μόνους τοὺς ἱερεῖς;

³ Do you not **this** know, which David did when he hungered he and the ones with him, ⁴**how he entered into God's house and taking the bread of the presence, he ate and gave to those with him, whom are not permitted to eat except the priests alone?**

Jesus response to the Pharisees is further highlighted in verse 5.³ Rather than simply continuing Jesus speech, Luke breaks it into two parts: the OT quotation and the principle that Jesus draws from the quotation. The quote is broken up by using a redundant quotative frame, i.e. an extra 'and he said to them' statement. The effect of breaking up speeches like this is typically to add prominence to the final segment of the speech. Thus in v. 5, Jesus claims that 'The Son of Man is the **Lord** of the Sabbath', which itself is also highlighted through the use of marked word order.

Luke 3:20

I will now move to the cataphoric uses of demonstratives that rely upon apposition to resolve the reference. The first example is from Luke 3:20. Verse 19 provides a prominent re-introduction of Herod back into the discourse. The verse states that John had reproved Herod about his wicked behavior. The only behavior specifically mentioned by Luke is Herod taking Herodias, the wife of his brother, as his wife. Verse 20 adds prominence to Herod's wicked behavior by stating that on top of all that he had done so far, he essentially did even more, namely the decision to place John the Baptist in prison.

προσέθηκεν καὶ τοῦτο ἐπὶ πᾶσιν [καὶ]
κατέκλεισεν τὸν Ἰωάννην ἐν φυλακῇ.

He added **also this** on [top of it] all, **He even locked up John in prison.**

Luke adds an ascensive καὶ to the demonstrative, explicitly adding this action to the previously mentioned actions of Herod. Note also that the resolution of the cataphoric reference also uses an ascensive καὶ to reinforce the parallel, based on the NA²⁷ text. Stated in this way, the reader learns that Herod's current action is even more wicked than the last, before we ever find out what his action is. Thus the decision to place John in prison is characterized as adding insult to injury. Herod's arrest of John receives added prominence by the cataphoric use of the demonstrative.

Luke 8:21

The next example is taken from Luke 8:21. In this passage Jesus is teaching inside a house that is filled to overflowing. As He is teaching, He is told that His family members are

³ It is noteworthy that v. 3 is highlighted in other ways besides the cataphoric demonstrative. The subject 'Jesus' is encoded using a NP rather than using either an articular pronoun or no expressed subject. Luke also uses two verbs of speaking, 'answered and said'. The verb *apokrinomai* is characteristically used when there is a change in initiators in a speech, what Levinsohn refers to as a 'countering move'. For more on these matters, cf. Levinsohn 2000:215-247.

outside waiting for Him. Instead of going outside to greet them, He turns the situation into yet another opportunity to describe what it means to follow Him.

μήτηρ μου καὶ ἀδελφοί μου οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ ἀκούοντες καὶ ποιοῦντες. “My mother and my brothers are **these: the ones hearing and doing the word of God.**

He states, “**These** are my mother and my brothers.” An appositional phrase follows to specify exactly *whom* He is referring to, namely **the ones hearing and doing the word of God**. Here too, the cataphoric demonstrative adds prominence to key ideas in the passage. The salient information is disclosed in the resolution of the cataphoric reference: ‘hearing’ and ‘doing’. These actions are further highlighted through the use of marked word order (cf. Levinsohn 2000:47).

Luke 12:18

The next example is from Luke 12:18, in the parable of the rich fool. Once again we find a clustering of prominence marking devices used in this context. Faced with the problem of having more stuff than his barns will hold, the rich fool asks the question, “What should I do, since I do not have a place to gather my produce?” Jesus interrupts the quotation of the rich fool with a redundant quotative frame just as in Luke 6. This is followed immediately by the statement containing the cataphoric pronoun.

τοῦτο ποιήσω, καθελῶ μου τὰς ἀποθήκας καὶ μείζονας οἰκοδομήσω καὶ συνάξω ἐκεῖ πάντα τὸν σῖτον καὶ τὰ ἀγαθὰ μου. “**This I will do: I will tear down my barns and larger ones will I build; and will store there all my seed and my goods.**”

The dilemma the rich fool faces and his proposed solution are separated in order to add prominence to the solution. Rather than giving to the poor, or selling what he has, the fool instead chooses to hoard his goods. Once again, we see Jesus using prominence markers to highlight important parts of His discourse. He adds prominence to the fool’s solution both through use of the redundant quotative frame to separate it from the problem. The use of the cataphoric pronoun adds prominence to his solution. Marked word order is also used to highlight that **bigger** barns are the key (Levinsohn 2000:18-24).

Luke 22:37

The next cataphoric use is found in Luke 22:37, where Jesus gives some final instructions before leaving for the garden of Gethsemane. In contrast to when Jesus first sent out the 70 and they were told to take nothing, Jesus now tells His disciples to bring their purse and bag, and even to acquire a sword. The mention of the need for a sword and the reason why it is needed are separated by a redundant quotative frame λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν “for I say to you”. His speech continues,

<p>τοῦτο τὸ γεγραμμένον δεῖ τελεσθῆναι ἐν ἐμοί, τό· καὶ μετὰ ἀνόμων ἐλογίσθη· καὶ γὰρ τὸ περὶ ἐμοῦ τέλος ἔχει.</p>	<p>This [thing] having been written it is necessary to be fulfilled in me, ‘And with lawless ones he was numbered’ for even [this] thing concerning me has an end.</p>
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The cataphoric pronoun adds prominence to the OT quote by delaying it and building some anticipation. The pronoun itself is highlighted using marked word order, as are the words of the quotation itself (cf. Levinsohn 2000:18-24). As in many of the other examples, we find prominence markers clustered around the use of the cataphoric pronoun. This clustering provides exegetical support for viewing these highlighted propositions as salient to the passage.

Cataphoric demonstratives are not used alone or in isolation by Luke.

Conclusion

It is my contention that the cataphoric demonstratives are employed by Luke as a highlighting device. Luke highlights propositions which are particularly important to the passage to make the reader or hearer sit up and take note. The cataphoric use of demonstratives is not just restricted to Greek. Instead it is an attested, cross-linguistic device which we are very familiar with in English. This device is used to assign prominence to a proposition that it would not otherwise have received. In most of the examples cited from Luke, a reader may well be able to decide that the highlighted propositions are important on the basis of its semantic content. However, attention to prominence marking devices such as cataphoric demonstratives provides objective exegetical evidence. This evidence stems from the writer’s decision to take the ‘long way around the bush’ so to speak, to mention something with a pronoun before we know that *it* refers to. It should also be noted that cataphoric demonstratives are not restricted to Luke. They are well attested in the balance of the Greek NT, especially in the writings of Paul and John.

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Luke 1:25

In Luke 1:5, Elizabeth and Zechariah receive a prominent introduction to the discourse. It is followed immediately by a description of them in vv. 6-7:

⁶ They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord. ⁷ But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years.
(NASB95)

Elizabeth's age and barrenness are both mentioned in verse 7. As a general rule, biblical narratives tend not to include specific details unless they are somehow relevant for interpretation. Therefore the question of how Elizabeth's barrenness relates to the narrative is raised; but it is not immediately answered. The story of Zechariah's encounter with the angel of the Lord follows. We read that he returns to Elizabeth after his duties in the temple are completed. This is followed by the announcement that Elizabeth becomes pregnant. However, up to this point in the story we have not read anything about what she is thinking or feeling regarding either her barrenness or the mute state of her husband.

At the end of v. 24 there is a rather cryptic reference to Elizabeth 'hiding' for a period of five months.⁴ The quotation of v. 25 which records her reason for rejoicing provides the only textual clue about why she might be hiding. Elizabeth could have rejoiced for many reasons. First, it could have been that she was having a child in her old age, as was the case with Sarah in Gen 21. Alternatively, it could have been that God had heard her voice, as was the case with Rachel in Gen 30:6, or with Hannah in 1Sa 1:20.

Instead, we find that the specific thing that she attributes to the Lord *is the removal of here reproach*. She first refers to this reason using a cataphoric demonstrative before she provides the specific reason.

Luke 1:24-25

καὶ περιέκρυβεν ἑαυτὴν μῆνας πέντε λέγουσα ²⁵ ὅτι
and she was hiding herself ²months ¹five saying -

Οὗτος μοι πεποίηκεν κύριος ἐν ἡμέραις αἷς ἐπείδεν ἀφελεῖν ὄνειδος μου ἐν ἀνθρώποις.
thus to me has done [the] Lord in days which he looked with to take away ²reproach ¹my among men.

Use of this cataphoric construction adds prominence to the proposition it refers to. One reason for highlighting this proposition may be to address the question of *why* Elizabeth is hiding.

Nolland has proposed that Elizabeth hid herself after becoming pregnant until 'the stage where

⁴ There is no indication from Luke as *why* she is hiding. Nolland suggests a possible rationale, stating: "With a sense of privacy about the precious and intimate way that God has dealt with her in her old age, she withdraws into seclusion with her secret until the stage where her pregnancy will be physically obvious. Her words of wonderment echo the experience of Sarah (Gen 21:1) and Rachel (Gen 30:23)" (2002:36).

her pregnancy will be physically obvious” (2002:36). The use of the imperfective verbal aspect for the verb of hiding and saying characterize her actions as ongoing or incomplete. It may indicate that she reassured herself with these words while she remained hidden. The participle λεγουσα modifies the main verb ‘was hiding’, constraining the reader to make an interpretive connection between the quotation and the main clause action. The fact that having her reproach removed is cataphorically highlighted adds further support to making a connection between her hiding and her reproach.

Luke 1:43

The next cataphoric demonstrative is found a few verses later in the same chapter, where Mary comes to visit Elizabeth. Elizabeth’s greeting to Mary uses several different grammatical devices to build toward a crescendo in v. 43. First there is the use of the participles in v. 42. Most translations render these verbs as though they were imperative. However, there is no main verb in v. 43 from which these participles can derive an imperatival force.

Note that the participles of v. 42 are parallel lines. The parallel concerns blessing. Mary is blessed, and so is the fruit of her womb. So how do these parallel clauses relate to v. 43? I would suggest that they are best understood as participles of attendant circumstance with respect to the verbless clause of v. 43: ‘The mother of my Lord has come to me’. In other words, a paraphrase would render these verses something like this: “In light of you being blessed among women, and the fruit of your womb being blessed, why in the world would you come to me?” Luke is not one to use participles as substitutes for finite verbs.⁵

Elizabeth’s exclamation highlights her view of how blessed she feels as a result of Mary’s visit. The two participles establish the attendant circumstances for the main proposition. The use of the perfect tense contributes support for the idea that the actions described have ongoing implications. The main proposition itself is highlighted through the use of the cataphoric demonstrative. I understand the initial και of v. 43 as ascensive, not as coordinate. This view is consistent with the use of the cataphoric demonstrative, building up to a dramatic point. Elizabeth’s next statement in v. 44 strengthens her assertion by providing a rationale for it: John jumping in her womb when he hears Mary’s voice.

⁵ The only other times the participial form of ελογεω is found with an imperatival force in Luke-Acts, he is quoting from Psalm 118:26, most likely from the LXX (cf. Lk 13:35; 19:38). The three other uses of the participial form are clearly adverbial (cf. Lk 1:64; 24:53; Acts 3:26). Based on Luke’s use of this lexeme, the evidence is much stronger for construing the participles in 1:42 as establishing attendant circumstance rather than the traditional view of imperatival force. In light of the cataphoric demonstrative that follows, the attendant circumstance reading fits much better with the context.

καὶ πόθεν μοι **τοῦτο** ἵνα ἔλθῃ ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ κυρίου μου πρὸς ἐμέ;
and why [has ²to me ¹this that should come the mother of the Lord of me to me?]