Narrative point of view: An ideological reading of Luke 12:35-48

A G van Aarde

ABSTRACT
Every text, including a narrative discourse, reflects the social context from which it originates, although in truncated form, presented from a particular ideological perspective. This article describes the temporal order of the incidents in Luke 12:35-48, the imagined social context, and the narrator's ideological perspective that knowledge entails responsibility. It suggests the reason for a "second" story in Luke 12:35-48, similar to that in Luke-Acts as a narrative whole.

1 INTRODUCTION
Narrative exegesis need not disregard the historical situation within which a particular text communicates. Indeed, the survival and functioning of a text in its extratextual world makes the hermeneutic exercise possible. To escape the web of structuralism, the historical situation should be considered in a narratological theory, despite all obstacles. One must therefore adopt the viewpoint that a narrative involves a network of themes and ideas which are intended to have meaning within a particular context. This network is termed an "ideology", which is presented in a narrative from a specific perspective. Hence the title: Narrative point of view. An ideological reading of Luke 12:35-48.

It is basic to narrative exegesis that a text should be approached holistically. The Gospel of Luke and Acts are presented as a narrative unity, although recorded as two travel narratives. A probable reason for this is their mutual relevance. While the journey in the Gospel of Luke ends in Jerusalem, the journey in Acts ends in Rome.

Luke 12:35-48 forms part of the narrative which concerns the journey to Jerusalem (Lk 9:51-19:44) and the following travel narrative concerns the way to Rome. In Luke 9:51-19:44 we find two opposing "ideological" perspectives: that of the Jews' religious leaders and that of Jesus himself. Peter's question (Lk 12:41) after the parable of the watchful servants (Lk 12:35-40), which is followed by the parable of a responsible manager (Lk 12:42-48), should be related intratextually with, inter alia, Jesus' remark in Luke 8:10, before the account of the journey to Jerusalem. There Jesus says that the disciples have been given knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for the others (τοῖς λοιποῖς) these secrets remain obscure (ἐν παραβολαῖς), with the result that they look without seeing and hear without understanding. Thus the "ideology" in Luke 12:35-48, particularly in the second parable in verses 42-46, emphasises that knowledge entails responsibility.
In this article we shall indicate, on the basis of a narratological reading of Luke 12:35-48, why the dominant perspective of this section is thus interpreted. We shall also attempt to describe the relevant social context of this "ideology", the specific use of the term "ideology", the compass of an "ideological" reading of a narrative discourse, and the poetics of a narrative.

2 IDEOLOGY IS AN IDEOLOGICALLY CONTESTED TERM
The term "ideology" is used as non-pejoratively as possible in this study, although we immediately concede that this is not really possible. Cronin (1987: 12) states that the term "ideology" can be understood either from the Marxist or an ideal, non-materialistic viewpoint. Marxist tradition links the concept of "ideology" to situations in which people find themselves with regard to economic production. Non-materialistic tradition involves theories of idealism as presently found in certain approaches of sociology of knowledge (Mannheim) and in sociologically determined phenomenology (later Husserl).

Proceeding on Althusser's theory concerning the practical functioning of an "ideology" as a literary device, the New Testament scholar Van Tilborg (1986:1) argues that, in Marxism, the concept of "ideology" is in fact not a reflection of reality or of its economic circumstances. Every "ideology" represents an "imagined" distortion of reality. Texts as "imagined" accounts of realities therefore belong to the sphere of "ideology" (Van Tilborg 1986:9). Within such literary theory frameworks the term "ideology" is increasingly used in narratology (cf, e.g., Uspenski 1973; Lotman 1975; Lanser 1981; Petersen 1978a; 1978b; Van Aarde [1982]; 1986; Anderson 1981; Resseguie 1982; Lintvelt 1981:168-169; Culpepper 1983:32-33; Du Rand 1986; Dawsey 1983; Sternberg 1985; Du Plooy 1986:9-10). Using the concept of "ideology", reference is made to the network of themes and ideas that occur in a narrative as an "imagined" version of a specific reality. "Ideology" in this context is therefore not to be simply equated with the "neutral" [sic] term "culture" (see Van Straaten 1987:7-8). The two concepts have, however, much in common. Let us look at this commonality.

3 AN IDEOLOGICAL READING OF NARRATIVE TEXTS
The connotation attached to the concept of "ideology" within a narratological framework is chiefly credited to the work of Boris Uspenski (1973), as well as the later work of Uspenski and Lotman (see Danow 1987).

Lotman and Uspenski do not regard a text as a configuration of language symbols, but rather as a complex symbol within a constellation of texts. "Culture" is described as the mechanism generating texts. Every text thus reflects the "culture" from which it is written. No text, however, accurately reflects a specific "culture" in its entirety. Danow quotes a remark from the work by Uspenski and Lotman, which has important intertextual implications:

A text can only be understood if it is compared extensively with the culture, or more precisely with the behavior of the people contemporary with it;
and their behavior can likewise only be made sense of if it is juxtaposed with a large number of texts (Lotman & Uspenski, in Danow 1987:352). In this connection, therefore, the term "culture" can be replaced by the term "social context". And in Lotman and Uspenski's work the term "social context" can be seen as an indirect, rather than direct, mechanism behind the generation of texts. It is people who are directly responsible for the production of texts.

All texts are in some way or other the products of real writers and are intended to be read and/or listened to by real readers and/or listeners. In verbal communication (such as in texts) there are always linguistic and perceptual dimensions. The expression "linguistic dimension" concerns the configuration of language symbols in a text, and the text as a language symbol in a constellation of texts. The "perceptual dimension" refers to a particular social context in a network of textual themes and ideas. This dimension is thus no more than evaluative imagining of particular social contexts.

In other words, while language (the linguistic dimension) is the communication code, a literary communication record (a text) presupposes an ideology (a network of themes and ideas) which is communicated and has meaning only in a certain social context. If the speech act takes the form of a narration, the ideological perspective (the evaluating point of view) is communicated by means of a narrative act.

The ideological perspective (the perceptual dimension) in the communication act causes the speech act to be presented in the form of a narrative act, manipulating the reader in such a way that he/she agrees with the ideological perspective or rejects it. In a narrative discourse a writer thus communicates an ideology to a reader by means of a narrator in the form of a story. The real writer and reader are both unconcerned with the intratextual narrative record (the narration of the story in the form of a narrative discourse), but should not be divorced from the ideological perspective which determines the perceptual dimension behind the communication record.

In the process of communication there are consequently intratextual and extratextual components. The social context concerns the extratextual component. Its construction depends on a knowledge of other texts, of social and cultural codes, and of the socio-cultural context of both the extratextual author and the extratextual reader. Extratextual factors however have exegetic relevance only in so far they manifest themselves in a specific text. The construction of the social context of a specific text depends on the text being read. However, the exegete need not undertake the construction of the social context only after the analysis of the specific text. One can first construct a context - such as a specific "imagination" of the first-century Judaic-Hellenistic world - and then read the text (e.g. Lk 12:35-48) in that particular social context. It is of course understood that the specific text will be interpreted meaningfully and coherently.
We now have to consider theoretically the continuity between the position of the narrator, the story being narrated and the narrative discourse as its product.

4 THE POETICS OF A NARRATIVE TEXT
The narrative act is one of the most natural means of illustrating something in the lives of people of a certain time and place. William Kurz (1987:196), in keeping with many earlier sociological phenomenologists, stated that "human experience has a narrative quality". Lotman (in Danow 1987:355-356; cf Stanzel 1986:2) considers that what is largely an unstructured and seemingly unfulfilled aspect of human existence - namely the need to arrange life according to defined principles - finds concrete expression in the generation of texts, and in narrative discourse in particular.

A text cannot be narrative if the events it contains do not constitute a linear, chronological series forming a story (cf Gräbe 1986:156). Only when the events selected from a larger synchronous whole are combined in a causal fashion into a series to develop a plot (Van Aarde 1986:63), has the "story" become a "narrative discourse". The "narrative discourse" is the organised narrative available to the exegete as the real reader. The arrangement of events and sequences of events takes place, according to Roman Jakobson (see Petersen 1978b:116), in terms of the principle he calls "equivalence", which consists of repetition and parallelism. Robert Tannehill (1984) calls it "echo effect". We shall return to this very important element.

The linear, chronological story is not directly available to the exegete. It must be abstracted from the narrative discourse, since the ideological perspective in a narrative is construed from the techniques used to form a story in a narrative discourse. In the conversion of a "story" into a "narrative discourse", or the abstraction of the former from the latter, one should attempt to identify the echo effect with a view to the unravelling of the narrative's communicative direction. If the sounds of the instruments in an orchestra do not have mutual resonance the result is a noise and interpretation is impossible (see Tannehill 1984:238). Echo effect and resonance are the same thing in principle.

The analysis of a "narrative discourse" is primarily directed at the description of characters' reciprocal relationships. This analysis is a precondition for the abstraction of the "story". Whatever the characters are doing in reciprocal relations can be visualised on five levels, namely the psychological, phraseological, temporal and spatial levels (see Uspenski 1973, and cf Petersen 1978a and Van Aarde [1982]). These five levels are inextricably linked to the position(s) that the narrator assumes in the narration.

This brings us, according to the narrative theory of Genette (1980:26-27), to the third part of the narrative, beside the "story" and the "narrative discourse", namely the "narrator's situation" ("narrating process"). The interaction between the situation of the narrator and the narrative discourse is usu-
ally described in terms of "point of view" or "focalisation". Exegetes use these two expressions as though they are exactly the same concept (see e.g. Culpeper 1983:20), but strictly speaking they are not (cf. Culley 1980:10; Genette 1980:186; Bal 1977:108-109; Rimmon-Kenan 1983:74-77).

Focalisation relates to the way in which the narrator focuses, such as from the viewpoint of a third person or a first person. A narrator may tell the story through a character or pose as a character.

Point of view in narratology no longer pertains only to this technical angle of vision. The concept has changed. It also involves the perceptual dimension from which a narrative discourse is compiled (see Lotman 1975). Point of view is nowadays much more concerned with who is narrating than with how observation takes place. Sternberg (1985:129) makes the following comment:

Far from a technical choice, point of view has emerged as an ideological crux and force, none the less artful for being thus engaged.

Whatever connotation is attached to the term "point of view", in narratology it involves the relationship between an observer and an observed object. All those who see or speak in a narrative act feature as interpreters and their views and diction are the result of a process of evaluation (cf. Sternberg 1985: 129). The entire narrative record unfolds as an interrelation between discourse, social context and ideological perspective. The exegete's dismantling of the three parts "forms neither a luxury nor a technicality but the very condition of making sense" (Sternberg 1985:129).

5 LUKE 12:35-48 AS A NARRATIVE DISCOURSE

We have already indicated that the narrative discourse is that available to the exegete. Two matters relating to the poetics of the narrative text have been highlighted, and we have said our analysis of Luke 12:35-48 as a narrative discourse will focus on these. They are the principle of resonance (or echo effect) and Uspenski's insight that the perspective of the narrator is manifested on at least five levels, namely the phraseological, psychological, temporal, spatial and ideological levels.

In analysing Luke 12:35-48 we shall briefly look into evidence of narrative point of view on the temporal level. The reason for this is that the concept of "resonance" concerns time. The aspect of "time" involved here is that which Genette (1980:35) calls "frequency" and which he describes as the investigation into the "relations between the repetitive capacities of the story and those of the narrative".

A narrative discourse has been described as "time art" (Petersen 1978a: 50). Genette's threefold classification of "story", "narrative discourse" and "narration" implies that a narrative record represents a network of "time art". Brink (1987:90) formulates this network as follows: while a narrating process (which takes time) results in a narrative discourse (which, in time, is read and which also offers codes in particular groupings of time), it above all gives sub-
stance to a story that can be construed from the discourse and in which something happens to someone in a certain position in time and space.

The aspects of "time" mentioned here essentially amount to two things - time which is quantitatively fluid, and time which is qualitatively set.

The former, "narrating time", involves time taken by the narrator telling the narrative discourse (Brink 1987:92 calls this "tekstyd") and the reader/listener reading/hearing the narrative discourse (Brink calls this "leestyd"). Narrating time is measured in terms of minutes or even in terms of the number of pages, sentences or words. In the present study we are not interested in narrating time as such, but rather in qualitative set time, or "narrated time".

Narrated time in turn relates to two periods. One is that covered by the story from the first moment to the last. The other concerns the various departures from the course. These two interlinking periods to which narrated time has relevance are separately indicated as "story time" and "plotted time" (see Petersen 1978a:47-48; Van Aarde [1982]:73-76; Brink 1987:92). "Plotted time" involves the ideological perspective(s) basic to the specific organisation of "story time". Let us turn our attention to "story time" in Luke 12:35-48.

Since an investigation into "story time" comprises, firstly, the period covered by the story and secondly, departures from the linear-chronological course of that period, it is necessary to abstract the story from the narrative discourse. A very simple method of doing so is to identify the beginning, middle and end of the story as well as the episodes comprising these three sections.

The story in Luke 12:35-48 tells of people in a household (ἀνθρώποις) (v 36) who are waiting for the coming of the Son of man (v 40). The Son of man appears to be presented metaphorically as the owner of the house (κύριος) who is attending a wedding (v 36) and unexpectedly returns. The people in the household are the workers and they are portrayed as "slaves" (δοῦλοι) (v 37), "household servants" (Θερσεία) (v 42) and as men servants and women servants (παῖδας καὶ παῖδισκας) (v 45). One of them is appointed as the "landlord" (οἰκοδομότης) (v 39), also referred to as the "manager"/ "foreman" (οἰκονόμος) (v 42). The workers are expected to be prepared for the coming of the owner of the house (v 35,40) and they will be rewarded accordingly.

By inference therefore, this metaphorical story consists therein that the owner has appointed people in his household to perform specific household tasks and another to act as foreman. The foreman must feed the other workers at the right time (v 42). The status of the foreman is that of primus inter pares, because he is also called a slave (δοῦλος) (v 45). The owner of the house however delays his return and there is a danger that the workers will cease to work ("gird their loins") and wait ("burn lamps") (v 35). Instead of giving the workers their food, the foreman beats them and holds parties and gets drunk (v 45). He does not prevent a thief from entering the house sud-
denly and unexpectedly (v 39). The owner also arrives suddenly and unex­
tedly. If the workers are still working the owner will reverse their status by
becoming a slave himself and serving them as lords (v 37). The faithful and
wise manager will be appointed over all the owner's possessions (v 46). The
manager, however, who knew what was expected of him but did not do it will
share the fate of the unfaithful and be severely punished (v 47). Had he not
known, his punishment would be less severe (v 48).

Our cultural conditioning has accustomed us to chronological "story time". Departures from the chronology therefore draw our attention and strongly contribute to the identification and development of the tension in the story. These departures, according to Genette (1980:33-85; 86-112; 113-160) can be studied in terms of temporal order, duration and frequency (see also Gräbe 1986:164-165 and Brink 1987:96-105).

As far as "temporal order" as a narrative strategy is concerned, a story may, for example, not be told chronologically from the time of someone's birth to his death, but may begin with his death and end at some other phase of his life. Many such variations are possible.

The story in Luke 12:35-48 is considerably confusing to the "narratecs" - that is, the disciples whom Jesus was addressing - as well as to the implied reader. This is because there is some uncertainty over the references to characters and places in the story. For example, is the coming of the Son of man to be equated to the return from the wedding banquet of the owner of the house? The answer to this question will also clarify the following uncertainty: is the action of the owner, who will serve the servants like lords on his return, the last moment to which reference is made in the story? Or is the owner's giving of all his possessions to the wise and faithful foreman the last mo­
mment? The action of the workers and that of the foreman may not necessarily take place simultaneously, but sequentially, although in the narrative dis­
course they are presented as intercalated (see Rimmon-Kenan 1983:89-91 and Prince 1982:64-65).

The episodes in the story in Luke 12:35-48 can be summarised as follows on the basis of the first section (v 35-40):

a The owner of the house appoints people in his household.
b He gives them orders: some as workers and one of them as foreman.
c The owner of a house goes to a wedding.
d His return is delayed/The wedding has not ended.
e Some of the people stop working and waiting and others obey the call
to be ready.
f The owner returns after the wedding is over; he becomes the servant of
the watchful, and serves them as lords.
g And the foreman? Is the watchful landlord (οἶκοδεσπότης), who
prevents the unexpected thief from breaking into the house, similarly
rewarded?
The *beginning* of the above abstracted story consists of episodes a, b, and c, the *middle* of episodes d and e, and the *end* of episodes f and g. The *pause* (see Genette 1980:99-106), which poses Peter's question in Luke 12:41, lets the implied reader wonder if the story indeed ends at episode f (v 38) and if the references to the action of the landlord and the coming of the Son of man (v 29) do not point to further episodes in the story. If this is so, episode g continues even after the narrating time has elapsed. Episodes a and b indeed represent a clear *ellipsis* (see Genette 1980:106-109) within the temporal order of the story. They refer to moments in the story which are not part of the narrative discourse at all. The narrative strategies "pause" and "ellipsis" are aspects that Genette handles under the category of "duration" and are means of departing from the chronological sequence in the course of the story.

As a result of the distorted sequence ("verkapte volgorde" - Brink 1987:96) of the story in Luke 12:35-48, as well as the fact that the episodes are not all included in the narrative discourse, the wider context of Luke-Acts must be taken into account to obtain greater clarity on all the uncertainties in Luke 12:35-48. This brings us to the second aspect that Genette (1980:47-70) considers should be studied under temporal order, namely *flashbacks* ("analepses") and *previews* ("prolepses").

Past and future references may occur within the framework of the story itself, or even extend beyond the beginning or end of the story. They can leave deliberate gaps in the story to be filled in later. In this way a reference to the past and a preview are sooner or later a repetition of an incident or episode already narrated, and this enters the domain that Genette (1980:113-160) terms "frequency".

Jakobson describes the poetic arrangement of literature in terms of "repetition" and "parallelism". The phenomenon is called "redundancy" by Sulciman (1980) and "temporal order" and "frequency" by Genette. Lyons (1980) has compared it to the resonance in music. In this connection Tannehill (1984:238) has expressed the following as a result of Lyons's insights:

*Information theorists note that every channel of communication is subject to "noise", i.e. "disturbances... which interfere with the faithful transmission of signals", and "a certain degree of redundancy is essential... in any communication system in order to counteract the disturbing effects of noise. In Luke-Acts one major source of "noise" is the length of the narrative, offering the reader a large opportunity to forget what has already happened. Redundancy combats the tendency to forget* (citation from Lyons; my emphasis).

The disturbing effect of the length of the travel narratives in Luke-Acts on the reader/listener may for many give rise to the question of why it is necessary to add the story of the journey to Rome to that of the journey to Jerusalem in the narrative discourse. Their length has the result that the link between the stories is often not perceived. We consider that this disturbing effect of the macro co-text repeats itself in the story that is told in Luke 12:35-48. It is reflected in the interrogative nature of the abstracted episode g: and
what of the foreman? When the wedding feast ends, is he also treated as a lord?

A disturbance in the story in Luke 12:35-48, we have seen, is the uncertainty whether the servant-like behaviour of the owner of the house toward his men servants and women servants is indeed the last moment to which the story refers. Should this be so, can the manager of the serving men and maids expect the same treatment from the owner on his return from the wedding?

This uncertainty is on the one hand reinforced by the fact that Jesus' "narratees" changed a great deal in the immediate literary context: in 12:1-12 the disciples were addressed in general; in 12:13-21 Jesus was speaking to someone in the crowd; in 12:22 the audience switched back to the disciples. As for the disciples, in the Gospel of Luke they are not an uncomplicated, uniform, separate group of characters. Unlike in the other two synoptic gospels the disciples, Jesus' followers, are not depicted as a group separate from Israel (cf Kingsbury 1981:122-123). What can be distinguished, however, are those among the crowds of Israel who, while seeing, did not see and, while hearing, did not understand (Lk 8:10 and Ac 28:26), as well as the religious leaders in Israel who were "fighters against God" (θεομαχοι) (Tannehill 1984:225 following on Ac 5:38-39), and the leaders among the followers of Jesus who acted with "divine authority".

On the other hand the uncertainty is evident from Peter's explicit question in Luke 12:41: Lord, is the story of the watchful workers meant for us or for everyone? This question highlights the disturbing effect in the story up to and including verse 40. To whom do the "us" and the "everyone" refer?

Strictly speaking, on the strength of Luke 8:10 it should not have been possible for those among the crowds of Israel who did not wish to recognise and follow their messiah, to participate in either Peter's ημας or his παντες - that is, if the reader/listener has not forgotten what has already been said in Luke 8:10. Nevertheless, the presence of this group in Israel is not irrelevant to the solution of the disturbance of which Peter's question bears witness.

It is precisely because Luke 8:10 previews the story in Luke 12:35-48 that the references in this story can be better understood. The men servants and women servants probably refer to the disciples in general. Those among them that gave up waiting for the wedding feast were like those who, seeing, did not see and, hearing, did not understand although the feast had originally been intended for their benefit (Ac 28:25-28). However, the status of those who joyously received their Messiah (Lk 19:37-39), was paradoxically reversed since their Lord served them like a slave until death. Viewed thus, the servant motif relates to the crucifixion of Jesus.

By allowing the Jesus logion "But I am among you as one who serves" (Lk 22:27c) to resound in the words of the "unknown" man going to Emmaus, whom they recognised as the crucified and risen one when he served them (Lk 24:30-31), at least one uncertainty in the story of Luke 12:35-48 is resolved. Because of the previews in Luke 12:35-48 regarding incidents beyond
the end of this section, it becomes clear that the owner of the house serving as a slave is not the last moment to which the story refers. There is another ending, and that is the coming of the Son of man. The story's continuation after the paradoxical actions of the owner of the house is an indication of the point around which the narrator's ideological point of view in Luke 12:35-48 revolves. This point is Peter's question: What about us, the leaders of the disciples? Does the reference to the Lord's slavelike action concern us as well?

At least one episode further on in the Gospel of Luke deals with this question, that is Luke 17:7-10.

This type of passage makes it clear that the work of the leaders among the followers of Jesus, to whom metaphorical reference is made in Luke 12:35-48, did not cease at the end of the journey to Jerusalem. Under pressure from the religious leaders of the Jews it was, however, possible that the preaching of the Word could be smothered in Jerusalem (Lk 19:39-40). For this reason it was necessary to tell a second story, one which would echo the first in many places. But when the narrating time ran out and there were no more pages to read, the question "And what about us, the foremen?" remained apparently - although ironically - unanswered for many. This story, however, continues until the coming of the Son of man. For the faithful and wise manager these words will apply: "Indeed, I tell you, the master will put that servant in charge of all his property" (Lk 12:44). So that no minister of the Word could say that he did not know that (with the journey to Rome in mind) much was entrusted to him and much would be required of him, a second story was told in Luke-Acts, like that in Luke 12:35-48.

6 THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE INTENDED READER/ LISTENERS OF LUKE-ACTS

The following is our interpretation of the "imagined" social context in which the story in Luke-Acts makes sense. The two linked travel narratives can be read as a political apology (cf Conzelman 1977:128-135). This trend should be understood against the background of two far-reaching events in the second half of the first century. One was the reorganisation of the Jews under Pharisee leadership, which had worldwide implications for people who enjoyed the legal protection of the Synagogue. The other is the fierce persecution of the Christians of Asia Minor by the Roman state at the end of the reign of emperor Domitian, from A D 81 to A D 96. These two events are related (see e.g Schmithals 1985:358-365; Katz 1984:55). Because of the specific connection between the events, the reader/listeners (and probably the writer) of Luke-Acts should be considered as being possibly somewhere in the northern or western part of Asia Minor.

The early church had by this time taken its first steps into the early catholic period. This early catholicisation is important if one is to gain a better understanding of the activities of certain characters in the parables in Luke 12:35-48.
The conflicts caused by the mingling of the Jewish and Hellenistic worlds of the reader/listeners, and the accommodation of believers from paganism, have helped form the context of Luke-Acts. On close inspection these conflicts were probably the primary cause of the political apology in the story.

The teleological conclusion to a narrative discourse holds important indications of why certain moments from the real world and the narrative discourse's pre-texts have been selected and combined in episodes in a specific manner. Mandelbaum (1967:414-415) made an important comment in this connection: "In any writing the end tropistically or teleologically selects the relevant material and excludes the non-relevant". Kurz (1987) elaborated on this. The final narrated episode of Luke-Acts seems to be in Rome. It is in this episode that the intended reader/listeners of Luke-Acts become part of the story. Viewed thus, the two connected parables in Luke 12:35-48, which are narrated on the journey to Jerusalem, acquire their referential meaning from the ideological post-perspective of an implied writer who, as the implied reader/listeners, know that Paul already arrived in Rome and who are waiting for the Son of man.

Kurz (1987:215) summarises this episode as follows:

* If we look at the ending of Acts as its goal, we see Acts leading up to the unhindered and open preaching of God's word in Rome, even though Paul himself is prisoner. Throughout Acts, the plot had led up to this ending, especially with the refrain that the word of God spread (Acts 6:7; 12:24; 13:49; 19:20). This spread of the word occurred often in the wake of resistance to the word and persecution of Christians.

In the light of Kurz's comment, the closing episode of Acts consists of the following elements:
* The church proclaims the Word in the midst of opposition and against it (Ac 28:20).
* Paul, who is not depicted as an apostle by the writer, but as a legitimised servant (office-bearer) of the Word who echoes the work and fate of the Twelve (particularly Peter) and that of Jesus himself (cf Radl 1975), came to Rome and proclaimed the gospel there without hindrance (Ac 28:31). (In doing so the writer also achieved the objective of his story regarding the αὐτῷ τοῦ λόγου [Lk 1:2]).
* Paul was still experiencing opposition from the Roman state. His imprisonment reflects this (Ac 28:20).
* Paul similarly encountered opposition from the Jewish leaders (Ac 28:17), since they heard the Word but were not converted (Ac 28:23-27). (Here the remark in Lk 8:10 is echoed).

Schmithals (1985:357-361) describes the opposition from both the synagogue and the state of Rome as follows, in terms of cause and result:

Before the reorganisation of the synagogue by the Jamnia leaders various Jewish groups and currents found themselves under one roof. Since they fell under the legal protection of the synagogue, they enjoyed the same privileges
as those the state of Rome accorded the synagogue. Hellenistic-Jewish Christians, who also accommodated pagan-Christians as part of their group, existed as such a direction within heterogeneous Judaism. After the loss of the temple - the Jewish cultural centre - in A.D. 70 the Pharisees in Jamnia instituted the pharisaic interpretation of the Torah as the new centre (see, e.g., Schäfer 1975:54-56,116-118; Stemburger 1977:14-16). This reorganisation forced the formerly heterogeneous Jewish community into a one-sided rabbinic-pharisaic determined community. Those who did not wish to comply were in danger of being banned from the Synagogue. Such people lost their legal protection. Pagan-Christians were naturally no longer welcome within the circles of official Judaism.

These developments apparently took place with the approval and support of the state of Rome. The emperor apparently wished to follow a political policy of internal peace in the period immediately following the Jewish war (Smallwood 1976:348-352). The Christians could therefore not depend on the support or protection of Rome. On the contrary, they were viewed as potential revolutionaries and indeed the Synagogue represented them as such to the state of Rome (cf Ac 17:7; 25:8; Schmithals 1987:373). This led to fierce persecution by emperor Domitian. Confiscation of property was part of the normal pattern of punishment (Rv 13:16-17; Heb 10:34), and since the persecutions were particularly directed at "ihr Haus verantwortlichen Hausherren" (Schmithals 1985:361), the congregations were often managed by women.

The political apology is reflected in Luke-Acts by the picture of the founder of the church, his apostles and the servants of the Word, as people who struggled against the representation of the Jesus-movement as a political movement (e.g., Lk 7:1-10; 19:38; 20:20-26; 23:2-7; Ac 17:7; 25:8). The image of the founder of the church as well as the church's "managers" is that of servant and victim of persecution (e.g., Ac 3:18; 4:27; 4:30 and 4:29; 13:35 resp). Conzelmann (1977:195) used the expression ecclesia pressa to describe this image. Where the Word was allowed to be proclaimed without hindrance despite opposition, the church regarded this permitted space as its peace (e.g., Ac 9:31 and 28:31).

Although we consider that in recent times someone such as Schmithals (1980; 1982; 1985; 1987) has largely correctly represented this apologetic trend, we differ from him regarding the role of the peace concept. It is Schmithals' impression that the unity and peace to which Luke-Acts refers chronologically precedes the period of false teachers (Ac 20:29-30). According to him this ties in with church heresy within the church (pre-Marcionism) which arose later. We feel that this "peace" should rather be understood as the peace of which the angels sang (Lk 2:14), and which was paradoxically the song of Jesus' jubilant followers at his entry into Jerusalem (Lk 19:38), despite the antagonism of the Pharisees (Lk 19:39). It is the same ironic "peace" - die Dialektik von Verfolgung und Frieden (Conzelmann 1977:196) - that the
church in Judea, Galilee and Samaria (Ac 9:31) experienced when the persecuting Saul became the one persecuted by the Jews (Ac 9:29). It remained so during a period of, on the one hand, persecution by the Roman state of even those in Rome (Ac 28:20,31) and on the other, rejection of Jesus by the Jewish leaders (Ac 28:17).

Against this background there was a real danger that the servants of the Word and eye-witnesses of the Jesus-events would be silenced (see Lk 19:39-4; Ac 4:29). It is evident that this happened from the congregation's leaders tendency to re-admit backsliders into the congregation (Lk 5:30-32; 15:1-32; 17:3-4; 18:14b). Within such a context the call to be watchful (Lk 12:36-39) carried meaning, so much the more if one had the responsibilities of an office-bearer (Lk 12:42-46).

7 THE NARRATOR'S IDEOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW IN LUKE 12:35-48


Resseguie indicates that in the story of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem there are two opposing ideological points of view: that of Jesus and that of his opponents (from which perspective the Pharisees and the scribes are presented). The antagonists' ideological perspective is that of self-aggrandisement and arrogance. "It represents an exaltation-oriented point of view that is diametrically opposed to the humiliation-oriented viewpoint that Jesus commends" (Resseguie 1982:44). The three parables in the travel narrative that focus consecutively and explicitly on the theme of the messianic banquet (Lk 14:7-11; 14:12-14; 14:15-24), strongly emphasise these opposing points of view, namely "humankind's way of thinking and acting" and "God's way of thinking and acting" (Resseguie 1982:46). The former is reflected in the desire to get the best seats at the banquet, to expect to be rewarded for good deeds, and to regard earthly bonds more important than participation at the banquet. This is how things were in the Synagogue, suggests the (implied) writer.

We can accept that the intended reader/listeners of Luke-Acts would associate the leaders of the Synagogue of their time with the leaders referred to in the text. Backsliding among the early Christian leaders could, in terms of the social context of the intended reader/listeners mean that they could adopt the view that was more characteristic of the religious leaders of Israel. This could happen because of the subjection to the opposition of the leaders of the Synagogue, the accusation of supposed anti-Roman politics and the persecutions that followed. According to the story in Luke 12:35-48, careful
catechism furnishes knowledge (Lk 1:4). Knowledge brings responsibility (Moore 1986:200-201) and it makes one fully accountable.

Apart from the above factors the delay in the Son of man's coming apparently led to the tension and backsliding among the leaders in the church (e.g. Lk 9:23-27). The mention in Luke 12:39 of the thief that breaks into the house is not in our opinion a reference to the Son of man. It concerns, rather, the possibility that someone could surreptitiously harm the household (cf also Lk 16:16). The opposing points of view shine through.

The eschatological reference to the Son of man in Luke-Acts (see too the vision of Stephen in Acts 7:56) is therefore not apocalyptically coloured, but instructive.

Compared with Matthew, Luke places a low premium on depicting the parousia as an apocalyptic panorama of the last judgment (cf e.g Mt 25:31-46). Instead, he employs parousia passages to exhort his community to perseverance, faithfulness and preparedness in the face of temptations and persecution (12:40; 17:22; 18:8; 21:36) (Kingsbury 1981:109; my emphasis). The term with which a call is made to watchfulness, γρηγορεῖτε (Lk 12:37), appears in Luke-Acts only one more time, in Acts 20:31 (see Tannehill 1986: 250). In the latter verse the leaders of the congregation of Ephesus are called upon to take up their responsibility, to have the proper attitude to worldly goods and to be prepared to suffer.

This call is offered as the words of Paul during his journey to Jerusalem where he was to be imprisoned, with the result that he could go to Rome. They are the words of a servant of the Word, suggests the (implied) writer who has taken the call of Jesus in Luke 12:35-48 to heart. Paul's words were probably repeated with an eye to the next generation of servants:

So I solemnly declare to you this very day: if any of you should be lost, I am not responsible. For I have not held back from announcing to you the whole purpose of God. So keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock which the Holy Spirit has placed in your care. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he made his own through the death of his Son. I know that after I leave, fierce wolves will come among you, and they will not spare the flock. The time will come when some men from your own group will tells lies to lead the believers away after them (Paul, according to Ac 20:26-30 - NEB).

The tragedy in the story of Luke-Acts is not only that the leaders of Israel were not ready to participate at the messianic banquet (see Tannehill 1985). As Jesus' journey to Jerusalem is told from the ironic perspective of his death/triumph, Paul's journey to Jerusalem and thence to Rome is told from the ironic perspective of his suffering/open preaching of the Word (cf Radl 1975:222-251). The tragedy is however that Peter was inclined not to have insight into his responsibility as leader of the disciples and to take sides with the leaders in Israel, as other leaders in the early church apparently did.
Peter (and Paul) overcame this temptation. What of the other foremen? And what of Theophilus?

WORKS CONSULTED


