

CONFLICTS IN ACTS: LUKE'S STYLE AND MISSIONARY PARADIGMS

Introduction:

The general issue of conflict in Luke-Acts

To a large extent the history of the church is a history of the church advancing through conflicts. As far as the early church is concerned, New Testament authors such as Paul, John, Mark, Luke and James, display interest in this issue, presenting some significant conflicts encountered by the first Christians, some external and some internal to the life of the community. Generally speaking, when writing about the Synoptic Gospels and Luke-Acts, the great majority of NT scholars tend to focus on the conflict between Jesus and the Jewish authorities, or between his disciples and the Jews who rejected the gospel, or on the confrontation between Jesus and Satan.¹ The recurring conflicts in the life of the church are, however, of a wider variety, and play an important role in the church's growth.

In particular, the author of Luke-Acts is keen to dwell on the various problems encountered by the Church in her first years of expansion.² Luke's selection of actual conflicts may reflect his access to sources, yet, at the same time, it also reflects his own theological emphases. In one of the earliest contributions to the assessment of Luke's interests in representing early church conflicts, NT scholars of the Tübingen school, such as F.C. Baur and E. Renan, argued that Luke composed the Acts of the Apostles as a *Catholic Irenicon*, attempting to pacify two opposite factions of Jewish and Gentile Christianity, which were represented by Peter and Paul's

¹ Cf. a few NT studies on this issue, such as J. D. Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1989); M. Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981); R. A. Horsley, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus*, (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1988); *idem*, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine*, (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1987); *idem*, *Galilee: History, Politics, People*, (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1996); M. J. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*, (New York, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1984); K. E. Corley, *Private Women, Public Meals: Social Conflict in the Synoptic Tradition*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993); S. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writing*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1989).

² Cf. R. L. Brawley, *Luke-Acts and the Jews: Conflict, Apology and Conciliation*, SBLMS 33, (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1987); J. S. Glen, *The Parables of Conflict in Luke*, (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1962); B. R. Grangaard, *Conflict and Authority in Luke 19:47 to 21:4*, SBL, (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1999); J. D. Kingsbury, *Conflict in Luke: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991); F. J. Matera, 'Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9.51-19.46): A Conflict with Israel', *JSNT* 51 (1993), 57-77; H. Moxnes, *The Economy of the Kingdom: Social Conflict and Economic Relations in Luke's Gospel*, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1988); see especially J. B. Tyson, 'Conflict as a Literary Theme in the Gospel of Luke', in W.R. Farmer (ed.), *New Synoptic Studies. The Cambridge Gospel Conference and Beyond*, (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983), 303-330.

supporters.³ The issue of Luke's audience, however, and of the purpose of Luke-Acts, have remained subject to debate.⁴

In this context, the present paper wants to focus on some of Luke's other intentions in portraying so many and such various conflicts, some having to do with the purity of the church, others dealing with issues of church organisation, others with missionary perspectives in the early church. One could ask, for example, what place had such conflicts, social, military, and ideological, in the writings of the 1st century BC – 1st century AD Hellenistic authors? Or, equally, how important were conflict paradigms for understanding the development of the church, and its evangelistic impact on first century society? Such issues have an important potential for enlightening the reader about Luke's theology and literary art, his views on the church, and as a first Christian historian.⁵

However, there might also be other benefits from such a study, coming from a more practical area of church life. Missionaries need, apparently, both biblical patterns in time of conflict and a complex psychological and cultural understanding of mission. As one missionary puts it –

... I had always attempted to resolve conflicts according to our perception of a 'biblical pattern', but often that seemed only to heighten the problem and cause

³ Cf. F. C. Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ, His Life and Work, His Epistles and His Doctrine*, (London: Williams and Norgate, 1876); E. Renan, *Les Évangiles et la seconde génération chrétienne*, (Paris, 1877); A. von Harnack, *The Acts of the Apostles*, (London: Williams & Norgate, 1909); O. Pfleiderer, *Der Paulinismus*, (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1873); H. J. Holtzmann, *Lehrbuch der historisch-kritischen Einleitung in das neue Testament*, Sammlung theologischer Lehrbücher, Freiburg: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1885.

⁴ Cf. R. Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982); J. L. Houlden, 'The Purpose of Luke', *JSNT* 21, (1984), 53-65; A. J. Mattill, 'The Jesus-Paul parallels and the purpose of Luke-Acts', *NT* 17 (1975), 15-46. On the conflict between the Lukan community or audience, and the Jews, see J. T. Sanders, *The Jews in Luke-Acts*, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987); and *idem*, 'The Jewish People in Luke-Acts', in J. B. Tyson (ed.), *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People*, (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1988), pp.51-75. See also, J. B. Tyson, 'The Problem of Jewish Rejection in Acts', in Tyson, *Luke-Acts*, 124-37; S. J. Joubert argues in favour of a mixed audience of Luke-Acts ('The Jerusalem Community as Role-Model for a Cosmopolitan Christian Group. A Socio-Literary Analysis of Luke's Symbolic Universe', *Neotestamentica*, 29 1995, 49-59. For F. W. Danker, Luke-Acts is primarily written for Graeco-Roman audiences, including Jewish and non-Jewish believers, ('Graeco-Roman Cultural Accommodation in the Christology of Luke-Acts', in *SBL 1983 Sem. Pap.*, 22, K. H. Richards (ed.), (Chico, CA: Scolars Press), 391-414, esp. p. 391.

⁵ The issue of Luke's threefold qualification has been surveyed by I. H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian*, (Exeter, Paternoster, 1970); E. Richard, 'Luke - Writer, theologian, Historian: Research and Orientation of the 1970's', *Bib.Th.Bul.* 13 (1983), 3-15, and was addressed by studies like those of D. W. Palmer, 'Acts and the Historical Monograph', *TynB*, 43/2 (1992), 373-88 (see also 'Acts and the Ancient Historical Monograph', in W. Bruce, D. Andrew (eds), *The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting* (from now on mentioned as *Ancient Literary Setting*), BAFCs 1, (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1993), 1-30); B. S. Rosner, 'Acts and Biblical History', *Ancient Literary Setting*, 65-82; F. S. Spencer, 'Acts and Modern Literary Approaches', *Ancient Literary Setting*, 381-414, P. E. Satterthwaite, 'Acts Against the Background of Classical Rhetoric', *Ancient Literary Setting*, 337-380, L. C. A. Alexander, 'Acts and Ancient Intellectual Biography', *Ancient Literary Setting*, 31-64; L. Alexander, *The Preface to Luke's Gospel: Literary convention and social context in Luke 1.1-4 and Acts 1.1*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993); E. Trocmé, *Le "Livre des Actes" et l'histoire*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957), etc. The present state of the debate is presented by J. Jerwell, who states that 'Luke is at least a historian in the sense that he understands history theologically', and 'He writes to proclaim and persuade'. - J. Jerwell, 'Retrospect and Prospect in Luke-Acts Interpretation', in E. H. Lovering, Jr. (ed.), *Society of Biblical Literature 1991 Seminar Papers*, (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1991), 383-403, p. 387, n. 25).

further misunderstanding. I began to explore the cultural beliefs and practices related to the causes of disputes, We discussed the strengths and weaknesses of each other's socio-cultural patterns. We analysed these patterns in terms of biblical patterns and then developed principles for working through cross-cultural conflict.⁶

A. Conflicts in Acts:

Luke's Literary Art between Vocabulary and Ideology

1. The Width of Luke's Conflict Vocabulary

A measure of Luke's keenness on narrating conflict stories is the extent of his conflict-related vocabulary.⁷ In the gospel, for example, he quotes Jesus on the implications of his messianic ministry, using *diamerizo* and *diamerismos*, which mean 'to divide' and 'division', (Lk. 21:51-52). Further, the Pharisees 'protested strongly' in Acts 23:9, *diamachomai*, meaning 'to fight or contend with', or to 'protest strongly'.⁸ The Sanhedrin are warned not to find themselves fighting against God (*theomachoi*, Acts 5:39). The verb *diamachomai* is often used by classical historians, for example Herodotus, *Hist*, 4.11.12, 4.125.16, 9.48.22, 9.67.10; Polybius, *Hist*, 1.51.9.3, 2.68.8.5, 3.65.11.2, 3.104.6.3, 8.4.8.4, 10.6.5.3, 16.31.8.5, 27.16.4.1, etc.

A special reference is provided by *anistamai* and *stasis* and their cognates.⁹ In particular, *stasis* occurs in Lk. 21:9 (*akatastasias*, 'insurrection', NRS), Acts 19:40 (*staseos*, 'rioting', NRS), Acts 21:38 (*anastatosas*, 'stirred up a revolt', NRS), Acts 24:10-12 (*epistamenos*, *epistasin ochlou*, 'stirring up a crowd', NRS). These nouns and verbs are closely paralleled by a large number of references by Greek historians, such as Herodotus, *stasiazonton... Athenaion*, the rebelling Athenians,

⁶ A. Howell, 'Reconciliation: A Reality or Simply Political Correctness', *ERT* 24/1 January, 2000 - initially, a lecture for SIM in Brisbane, Australia, 17 April, 1999; see A. Howell (ed), *The Slave Trade and Reconciliation: a North Ghanaian Perspective*, (Accra: Bible Church of Africa and SIM Ghana, 1998); *idem*, *Working together cross-culturally: Some lessons learned from Northern Ghana*, (Accra: SIM Ghana, 1996).

⁷ Scholarly studies on Luke's vocabulary have showed that his style belongs 'somewhere between the better Hellenistic writers and Dionysius' (D. L. Mealand, 'Luke-Acts and the Verbs of Dionysius of Halicarnassus', *JSNT* 63 (1996), 63-86, p.86; See also Mealand, 'Hellenistic Historians and the Style of Acts', *ZNW* 82 (1991), 42-66, cf. pp. 45-46, 50, esp. p. 66: 'I conclude that the affinities between Acts and the major Hellenistic historians such as Polybius and his successors have been underestimated'. Also, A. Wifstrand, 'Lukas och den grekiska klassicismen', *SEA* 5 (1940), 139-51.

⁸ *Diamachomai*, in J. P. Louw, and E. A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, (NY: UBS, 1988, 1989), vol. 1, 39.27, p. 496. Herodotus uses the term with the meaning 'armed protest', 'battle', *Historia*, 4.11.12, 4.125.16, etc. Similarly, Polybius, *Historia*, 1.51.9.3, 1.57.1.4, 3.65.11.2, 3.69.9.2, etc.

⁹ Their general meaning is 'to rise up in open defiance of authority, with the presumed intention to overthrow it or to act in complete opposition to its demands', cf. Louw and Nida, *Lexicon*, 39.33, vol. 1, p. 497. The noun *stasis* does often mean 'sedition', 'dissension', 'insurrection', 'uproar', but it can also mean 'standing', 'station', 'state', 'state', 'camp', being a derivative of *histemi*, a prolonged form of a primary *stao*, which means 'to set', 'to establish', 'to stand still', 'stand by', 'to place', 'to put', etc. (cf. G. Delling, 'stasis', in G. W. Bromiley (trans), G. Kittel (ed), *Theological Dictionary of the NT*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), vol. 7, p. 568-571).

Hist, 1.59.14; *ep' alleloisi estasiasan*, they fought among themselves, *Hist*, 1.60.6; *perielauomenos de te stasi*, surrounded by the rebels (lit., by the rebellion), *Hist*, 1.60.6; *hos epekratese te stasi*, as he overpowered the rebellion, *Hist*, 1.173.6)¹⁰; Josephus Flavius (*De Bello Judaica*, 4.545.1 [4.9.9], *stasis en kai polemos emphulios*, sedition and civil war prevailed; *Antiquitates Judaicae*, 20.173.1, *ginetai de kai ton Kaisareian oikounton Ioudaion stasis pros tous en aute Surous*, a great sedition arose between the Jews that inhabited Cesarea, and the Syrians who also lived there; *AJ*, 4.p.5, *stasis Koreou*, the revolt of Koreh, etc. – *stasis* and its cognates occur frequently in the works of Josephus); further, they can be met in Flavius Arrianus (*Alexandri Anabasis*, 3.11.2.2); Appianus (*Bellum Civile*, 1.4.27.1), etc.

Luke also uses *sunchusis* and *sustrophes* (Acts 10:29, 40), both meaning 'disturbance', 'uproar', 'disorderly mob revolt'. In Hellenistic literature these nouns occur in various descriptions of conflicts, used in the straightforward sense, as in Polybius, *Hist*, 15.25.8.5-6, *megalēn genesthai ten sugchusin ton ochlon*, 'the people were much stirred' (W. R. Paton, LCL); Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica*, 11.8.2.1, *touton de meta megales sustrophes kai bias epirraxanton tois Ellesin*, 'these [men] hurled themselves upon the Greeks as one mighty mass and with great violence' (C.H. Oldfather, LCL); or in the figurative, as in Polybius, *Hist*, 23.2.2.1, *tes toiautes sustrophes*, 'such a whirl of complications' (Paton), etc. They equally appear in the context of geographical descriptions of unsettled seas, storms, calamities, or in the descriptions of nations or groups of people, like in Strabo, *Geographia*, 6.2.3.19, *Charubdis...*, *bathos exaision, eis ho hai palirroiai tou porthmou katagousi phusikes ta skaphe traxelizomena meta sustrophes kai dines megales*, 'Charybdis... a monstrous deep, into which the ships are easily drawn by the reflux currents of the strait and plunged prow-foremost along with a mighty eddying of the whirlpool' (H.L. Jones, LCL); or, *idem*, *Geog*, 17.1.53.12, *Aithiopes... oud' houton polloi oute en sustrophe*, '[The Southern] Ethiopians... they are not numerous, nor do they collect in one mass' (Jones).¹¹

Luke uses *thorubeo* with a similar meaning, of 'starting a riot' or 'causing an uproar', see *ochlopoiesantes ethoruboun ten polin*, 'they formed a mob and caused an uproar in the city', in Acts 17:5; or *anaseio*, in Lk 23:5, *anaseiei ton laon didaskon*, 'he is starting a riot among the people with his teaching'; or *kineo* in Acts 21:30, *ekinethe te he polis hole*,

¹⁰ Although, Herodotus makes use of the other meanings of *stasis*, as well, as in *Hist*, 2.26.4, *ei de he stasis ellakto ton horeon kai tou ouranou*, If the position of the seasons would change, as well as that of the heaven; *Hist*, 1.59.18, *egeire triphen stasin, sullaxa de stasiota*, He [Peisistratos] stirred [to rebellion] a third camp, gathering supporters, etc.

¹¹ As it can be noted, translators could choose various alternatives, thus, *sustrophes* seen as 'disturbance' can be translated also as 'whirlpool', in geographical books, or 'one mass', i.e., as one large crowd.

'the whole city was set in an uproar'; *tarasso* in Acts 17:8, *ektaraxan de ton ochlon*, 'they caused the crowd to riot' or 'they threw the crowd into an uproar', and in Acts 16:20, *houtoi hoi anthropoi ektarassousin hemon ten polin Ioudaioi huparchontes* 'these men are Jews and they are stirring up people in our city'; or *episeio*, in Acts 14.9 (variant in the critical apparatus), *episeisantes tous ochlous* 'they incited the crowds'.

The last verb occurs in many Hellenistic descriptions of conflicts, or, in general, of riots and unrests of all kinds, for example, as in Plutarchus, *Pyrrhus*, 17.6.4, *epagagon ten Thessaliken hippon autois tarassomenois, etrepato pollo phono*, '[Pyrrhus] brought his Thessalian cavalry upon them, while they were in confusion [or 'and, being confused,' etc., m.note] and routed them with great slaughter' (B. Perrin, LCL), or, with a positive sense (not letting trouble beset one), in Josephus, *AJ*, 12.164.3, *anabas eis to hieron ho Iosepos kai sugkalesas to pleteps eis ekklesian meden tarassesthai mede phobeisthai parenei*, 'Joseph went up into the temple, and summoned the multitude for an assembly, and exhorted them not to be disturbed nor afraid' (cf. John 14.27, where Jesus counsels his disciples, *me tarassestho humon he kardia mede deiliato*, 'do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid', NRS).

In connection with all these instances, one should mention further, as integral, Luke's rich vocabulary which is used when he wishes to describe forceful attacks, verbal or physical, of assaults and ambushes, in Luke-Acts;¹² verbs like *eperchomai* ('to attack', NRS; cf. Lk 11:22, in the parable of the strong man), *ephistamai* ('set' in an uproar', NRS, Acts 17:5, the Jason episode), *katephistamai* ('make a united attack', NRS, Acts 18:12, Paul's trial; see also *epitithemai*, Acts 18:10, 'lay a hand on you', NRS; *sunepitithemai*, Acts 24:9, 'to join the charge', NRS; *sunephistamai*, Acts 16:22, 'joined in attacking them', NRS), and the *enedreuo* ('ambush', NRS, Acts 23:16, 21, the episode where Paul is warned by his nephew of the ambush planned by the Jews). Two rather singular occurrences are *pateo* 'to trample', which is used with the meaning 'to conquer' (cf. Lk. 21:24), and *katakurieuo*, meaning 'to overpower' (cf. Acts 19:16, where the demoniac overpowers the sons of Sceva, the priest).

Two special occurrences, somewhat in contrast with the examples discussed so far, are also an important part of Luke's 'conflict' vocabulary, namely *goggusmos* ('complaint', 'murmuring', 'muttering')¹³ and

¹² For all this discussion, cf. Louw and Nida, *Lexicon*, 'rebellion', 39.34-41, 'riot', 39.42-44, 'persecution', 39.45-46, 'attack', 39.47-50, 'ambush', 39.51, and 'conquer', 39.52-61.

¹³ K. H. Rengstorf, 'gogguzo, goggusmos, etc.', *TDNT*, 1:728-737, cf. p. 735; *goggusmos* means 'murmuring', 'grudging', 'muttering'; a secret displeasure not openly avowed.

paroxusmos ('irritation', 'exasperation', 'provocation')¹⁴. The first occurs in Acts 6:1, *egeneto goggusmos*, 'there has occurred a complaint', etc. Outside the NT, the word occurs mostly in comic and popular literature, cf. Anaxandrides, the Comic, *Fragmenta* 31.1, and especially *Vitae Aesopi G* (e cod 397 Bibliothecae Pierponti Morg.), 47.5. In particular, the fragment from *The Life of Aesop*, also known as *The Aesop Romance*, mentions *goggusmos* in the context of a humorous anecdote: a few learned fellows meet informally, for chatting and drinking, when one raises an odd question, 'what circumstance will produce great consternation¹⁵ among men?' According to the story, Aesop, listening to them while standing behind his master, suggested that this could only happen 'if the dead were to arise and demand back their property...' His witty reply caused much laughter and muttering [*polus gelos kai pleistos goggusmos*].¹⁶ Such a background for *goggusmos* provides a further interesting literary parallel for studying Luke's use of irony in Luke-Acts.¹⁷

It is important to note, at the same time, that this noun is also present in later Christian literature, mostly in contexts related to OT exegesis, such as *The Epistle of Barnabas* 3.5.3, in relation to Isaiah 58:5, and in Ignatius, *Epistulae interpolatae et epistulae suppositiciae*, 3.3.8.4 (cf. *The Epistle to the Magnesians*, ch. 3), in relation to 1 Sam. 8:6-7, and Numbers 16. To the extent to which Luke builds in Luke-Acts the picture of the Church seen as the new people of God, experiencing a New Exodus, these parallels are testimonies to the early type of allegorical exegesis which shaped the identity and mission of the first Christians.¹⁸

¹⁴ H. Seeseman, 'paroxuno, paroxusmos', *TDNT*, 5:857; *paroxusmos* means 'contention', 'incitement', 'irritation', coming from *paroxuno*, 'to stir', 'to make sharp', 'to stimulate', 'to irritate', 'to provoke', 'to arouse to anger', 'to scorn, despise', 'to exasperate'.

¹⁵ In Greek, *megale tarache*, note the root *tarag-*, of *tarasso* and *ektarasso*, 'to start a riot'.

¹⁶ *Vitae Aesopi*, G 47.1-47.10; see *The Aesop Romance*, in L. W. Daly (trans), and W. Hansen (ed), *Anthology of Ancient Greek Popular Literature*, (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana UP, 1988), 106-162, p. 131.

¹⁷ Among the first to suggest that Acts should be looked at as a Hellenistic novel, are S.P. and M.J. Schierling, 'The Influence of the Ancient Romance on Acts of the Apostles', *The Classical Bulletin*, 54 (1978), 81-88, and R. I. Pervo, *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles*, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987). See also J. L. Ray, *Narrative Irony in Luke-Acts: The Paradoxical Interaction of Prophetic Fulfillment and Jewish Rejection*, Mellen Biblical Series 48, (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1996); W. S. Kurz, *Reading Luke-Acts. Dynamics of Biblical Narrative*, 1993, pp. 2-3, 69-70, 135-166; R. C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts. A Literary Interpretation*, (vol.1), (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press), pp. 284, 288-289; J.M. Dawsey, *The Lukan Voice: Confusion and Irony in the Gospel of Luke*, (Macon, GA: Mercer UP, 1986); Cf. as well, C. Gempf, 'Mission and Misunderstanding: Paul and Barnabas in Lystra (Acts 14:8-20)', in A. Billington, T. Lane, and M. Turner (eds), *Mission and Meaning. Essays Presented to Peter Cotterell*, (Carlisle: Paternoster, 56-69, 1995).

¹⁸ This subject is presented in a general manner in W. M. Swartley, *Israel's Scripture Traditions and the Synoptic Gospels*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), esp. pp. 275-297; A. Denaux, 'Old Testament Models for the Lukan Travel Narrative: A Critical Survey', in C. M. Tuckett (ed), *The Scriptures in the Gospels*, (Leuven: Leuven UP, 1997), 271-305. An extensive argument is developed in M. L. Strauss, *The Davidic Messiah in Luke-Acts: The Promise and Its Fulfillment in Lukan Christology*, JSNT Supplement Series 110, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), p. 271. From this point of view probably an OT parallel is intended by John as well, in Jn. 7:12, since he is interested in the messianic parallel between Jesus and Moses; not far from this perspective are Phil 2.14 and 1 Pt. 4:9.

The second word, *paroxusmos*, can be found in Acts 15:39 as an assessment of the acrimonious dispute which led to the separation of Paul and Barnabas at the beginning of the second missionary journey (*apoxoristhenai autous ap' allelon*).¹⁹ Apparently, it has a larger representation in the Hellenistic literature, used in the figurative, philosophical sense, and also in the straightforward sense when related, for example, to medical practice. For example, it occurs in one of Demosthenes's speeches, *Orationes* 45.14.4 (i.e., *In Stephanum*, 14:4), where he addresses the Athenians, pointing out that there is no gain in irritation and strife (*o andres Athenaioi, hosoi men prosestin orge ton pratomenon e lemna ti kerdous e paroxusmos e philonikia*, etc.). In the medical sense, *proxusmos* occurs in the works of such authors as Rufus Ephesius, *Quaestiones medicinales* 43.2; Soranus Ephesius, *Gynaeciorum Libri* 4, 1.36-3.50; Dioscorides Pedanius, *Euporista* 1.26.1.3, 2.48.1.1; Archigenes Apamensis, *Fragmenta inedita* 68.7; and even in the letters of Ignatius (*Epistulae vii genuinae* 7.2.1.3, i.e., *The Epistle to Polycarp*, 7.2.1.3; cf. *Epistulae interpolatae et epistulae suppositiciae*, 8.2.1.3, 9.11.2.2). Luke's inclination to use such terms supports the traditional view that he was a doctor (cf. Col. 4:14), although it does not prove it.

2. Hellenistic Historians and 'The Father of All Literature'

Many of the main Greek and Hellenistic history treatises appear to indicate that the conflict motif is central to ancient historiography. Herodotus unifies all his 9-volume work, full of descriptions of places, persons and wars, around a central conflict, aiming at presenting the reasons for which Greeks and Persians came to fight each other, *aition epolemesan allelois* (*Hist*, 1.1.4).²⁰

Thucydides starts his *History* by arguing that the Peloponesian war is a war worthy of account (*Hist*, 1.1.1, 5.26.5).²¹

As someone who is on the whole critical of those exploiting to the extreme this focus on conflicts, Lucian of Samosata writes with some contempt that at the popular level, after a period with many wars, revolts, and a seemingly unending series of Roman victories 'none could help

¹⁹ Interestingly, and slightly ironical, the other occurrence in the NT of *paroxusmos* is Heb. 10:24, as an incitement to manifesting love to one another: 'and let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds' (*kai katanoomen allelou ei paroxusmon agape kai kalon ergon*).

²⁰ And, even from the beginning, Herodotus informs us that according to the Persians, *...Phoinika aitiou phasi genesthai te diaphore*, the Phoenicians were those who started all the dissension (*Hist*, 1.1.6).

²¹ On the relationship between Luke and Thucydides, see W. J. McCoy, 'In the shadow of Thucydides', in B. Witherington III, *History, Literature and Society in the Book of Acts*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 3-32.

nowadays writing history' (*oudeis hostis ouch historian*), and, as the old saying goes, *polemos hapanton pater*, 'war is the father of all [literature]'.²²

Writers such as Homer did not evoke only the human heroes' great achievements or adventures, but wrote also of the Greek gods' adventures and of their capricious, often cruel way of living. Herodotus refers to such a perception of the gods, in his *Hist*, 1.32.5-9, when he describes them as *phthoneron te kai tarachodes*, revengeful and rebellious. Xenophanes and Heraclitus were, therefore, critical of Homer and Hesiod, for having 'attributed to the gods all that is a reproach and scandal among men', *hossa par' anthropoisin oneidea kai psogos estin*.²³ Even Plato joined this critical campaign although he praises Homer as a leader of tragedians and the first poet of the Greeks.²⁴ At the same time, the rhapsodist's portrayal of gods is impious and led to vulgarity among youth, women, and children.²⁵

Historians, or, at least popular historians, would thus see in conflicts of all sorts a major source for their writing. Since Luke-Acts displays both historiographical features and traits specific to 'popular literature',²⁶ we suggest, therefore, in consonance with its assessment by the majority of NT scholars, that it belongs somewhere midway between Hellenistic novels

²² Lucian, *Quomodo historia conscribenda sit*, 2.1-2.13. On the relevance of this work for Luke-Acts, see, C.K. Barrett, 'How History Should Be Written', in Witherington III, *History, Literature*, 33-57 (also published as 'Quomodo Historia Conscribenda Sit', *NTS* 28 (1982), 303-320); cf. also J. McNicol, D. L. Dungan and D. B. Peabody, *Luke's use of Matthew: Beyond the Q impasse. A demonstration by the research team of the international institute for gospel studies*, (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1996), pp. 31-32; J. Dupont, 'La question du plan des Actes des Apôtres à la lumière d'un texte de Lucien de Samosate', *NovT* 21 (1979), 220-231. For the English translation, see Lucian of Samosata, *How to Write History*, in *The Works of Lucian*, K. Kilburn (trans), LCL, (Harvard, MA: Harvard UP, 1958).

²³ Xenophanes, *Fragmenta* 9.1, 10.1; Cf. J. D. Denniston, *Greek Literary Criticism*, (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1924), pp. xiii-xiv.

²⁴ Plato, *Rep.* 598d, 600e.

²⁵ Plato, *Rep.* 388d.2, 392d.4-398a; esp. 397d and 602b.8. Cf. P. Murray, *Plato on Poetry. Ion, Republic 376e-398b, Republic 595-608b*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 178-179.

²⁶ It is difficult to draw a sharp distinction between the coherent *Kunstliteratur* (artistic literature) and the fragmentary, episodic *Kleinliteratur* (popular literature) in Hellenistic culture. It may be more 'in the degree rather than in kind' (H. J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, (London: Macmillan, 1958 (1927)), p. 131). For W. Hansen, the specific traits of the *folkbook* are anonymous authorship, textual fluidity, popularity, and nonorganic composition (conglomerate of short stories) - Luke-Acts would not fit this entirely. Luke-Acts is not a conglomerate of interchangeable episodes, like the *Vitae Aesopi*, but has plot development (Hansen, *Anthology*, p. xxii). Cf. also C. F. Evans, 'Speeches in Acts', in A. Descamps and R. de Halleux (eds), *Mélanges Bibliques en hommage à R. P. Beda Rigaux*, (Gembloux: Duculot, 1970), 287-302. A. Wifstrand and L. Rydberg see Luke-Acts as *Zwischenprosa*, intermediary and popular prose (cf. A. Wifstrand, *L'Église ancienne et la culture grecque*, (trans. by L.M. Dewailly, of *Fornkyrkan och den grekkista Bildningen*, (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokforlag, 1957)), Paris: Cerf, 1962, p. 46; *idem*, 'Lukas och Klassicismen', *Swensk Exegetische Arsbock* 5 (1940), pp. 139-151; L. Rydberg, *Fachprosa, vermeintliche Volkssprache und Neues Testament: Zur Beurteilung der sprachlichen Niveaunterschiede im nachklassischen Griechisch*, (Uppsala: Academia, 1967), pp. 177, 187-90 (so, L. Alexander, *Preface*, pp. 169-172; D. Dormeyer, *The New Testament Among the Writings of Antiquity*, (Sheffield: Sheffield AP, 1998), pp. 47-48).

and historical monographs,²⁷ not avoiding the subject of conflicts and scandalous stories as a theme for its plot line, nor abusing them, yet acknowledging in substance and form that such subjects are a major source for literature and for oral recounts of life.²⁸ Conflicts in general and, in particular, cultural conflicts tended, in Antiquity, to become matters of general concern.

3. Barriers to the Gospel: Conflicts of Cultural Protectionism

In Plato's discussion of art theories,²⁹ characteristically placed in the context of his interest in politics in the life of the ideal Greek city,³⁰ we find an interesting assessment of the sociological role of culture in the life of the community.³¹

In general, Plato's views on dramatic arts and poetry are minimalist and negative. For him artistic representation of reality is 'an inferior child born of inferior parents',³² bringing an alienating element with it, that is, the assimilation of 'oneself to another person in speech or manner'.³³ Accordingly, recitation, repetition, acting, are supremely dangerous for they can involve a change for the worst for the whole person (voice, thinking, movement), they can create bad habits and encourage indulgence, interfering destructively with the character of the young.³⁴ As education in the Greek city depended on recitation of poetry and drama, Plato was afraid that 'students would tend to become like the characters they

²⁷ Pervo, in *Profit*, p.137, wrote that despite the fact that 'traditionally the canonical book of Acts has been regarded as a unique text with close analogies to historiography historical monographs with convincing affinities to Acts are difficult to identify', while 'novels that bear likeness to Acts are on the other hand, relatively abundant'. The arguments of studies such as those of E. Trocmé, *Le Livre des Actes et l'Histoire*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957); C. J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1989); M. Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity*, (London: SCM Press, 1979); G. E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephus, Luke-Acts, and Apologetic Historiography*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992); C. H. Talbert, 'The Acts of the Apostles: monograph or "bios"?' in B. Witherington III (ed), *History, Literature, and Society in the Book of Acts*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 58-72, etc., have established well that Acts should be seen as well as historiography. The present study comes with a middle way suggestion, i.e., that Acts should be seen as popular historiography involving elements of Hellenistic novel.

²⁸ For a review of recent studies on Lukan historiography, see J. S. Jauregui, 'Historiografía y teología en Hechos. Estado de la investigación desde 1980', *EstB* 53 (1995), 97-123.

²⁹ On the relation between representation or imitation (mimesis) and music, cf. *Laws*, 668a, 953a-b; on painting: *Rep.* 596d, 598b; on poetry: *Rep.* 392d.5, 394-398, etc.

³⁰ For Plato the planning of an ideal city is in fact a 'mimesis [imitation] of the fairest and truest life, which is in reality, as we assert, the truest tragedy' (*Laws*, 817b.5; cf. A. Melberg, *Theories of Mimesis*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), p. 21).

³¹ P. Murray, *Plato*, p. 182; Plato, *Rep.* 393c.1-3, 397d.1-3.

³² Plato, *Rep.* 603b.3-4.

³³ Plato, *Rep.* 393c.5-6 (Lee).

³⁴ Plato, *Rep.* 395-397; 695-697; *Laws*, 817a-e. Cf. 'we assert, then, that every means must be employed, not only to prevent our children from desiring to copy different models in dancing or singing, but also to prevent anyone from tempting them by the inducement of pleasures' (*Laws*, 798e.4-8; Bury).

impersonated'.³⁵ Impersonation becomes a problem of life and death for Plato, for fear of a 'loss of self' and of a loss of character.³⁶ He would strongly recommend, thus, that students and literary authors should use the plain narrative style (*diegesis*), and less impersonation.³⁷

Plato would see an accurate representation of some past (already accepted) drama as better than any new and creative performances; in other words, 'correctness' above 'pleasure'.³⁸ In general, the balanced man, *metrios aner*, should get involved, according to Plato, only with representing (or playing, or imitating) good characters.³⁹

As an application of these principles, Plato outlines a very restrictive policy towards visiting actors, and in general, towards all strangers (*xenoi*):

do not imagine, then, that we will ever thus lightly allow you to set up your stage beside us in the market-place, and give permission to those imported actors of yours, with their dulcet tones and their voices louder than ours, to harangue women and children and the whole populace, and to say not the same things as we say about the same institutions, but, on the contrary, things that are, for the most part, just the opposite...⁴⁰

Cultural purity needs, according to Plato, to be guarded by checking the casual visitor upon his arrival 'when he comes to the city, [and] at the markets, harbours, and public buildings outside the city, by the officials in charge'. Thus, the leaders 'shall have a care lest any such strangers introduce any innovation [*me neoterrize*]'.⁴¹

At the same time, Plato recommends a polite welcome of foreign cultural representatives (or 'inspectors') who have been journeying 'to view some noble object which is superior in beauty to anything to be found in other States'.⁴² The leaders of the ideal Greek city should politely assist

³⁵ P. Woodruff, 'Aristotle on mimesis', in A.O. Rorty (ed), *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics*, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992), 73-95, esp. p. 76.

³⁶ Melberg, *Theories*, p. 20.

³⁷ Plato, *Rep.* 393e. Plato's antithetical examples include the scene where Chryses, rejected by Agamemnon in his request, starts a vivid series of imprecations (Homer, *Iliad*, 1.15f). Impersonating imitation reaches its worst when bad language is joined by vulgar gestures (Plato, *Rep.* 392e-394b). Plato's philosophical ideal of written literature is set thus in opposition to the 'oral representation, characteristic of the 'homeric state of mind' (cf. E. R. Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1963), p. 41). See Plato, *Laws*, 654b-657b; 668a-e; 797b-c; 799b; 817a-e.

³⁸ Plato, *Laws*, 668a.8-b.2; 668b.5-6.

³⁹ Plato, *Rep.* 396c.5-e.2 (Lee).

⁴⁰ Plato, *Laws*, 817c.1-8.

⁴¹ Plato, *Laws*, 952e.6-953a.1.

⁴² Plato, *Laws*, 953c-e. The benefits of knowledge are often associated with journeying, and *theoria* itself 'implies a journey'. In Herodotus' description of Solon's travels *theoria* is used as a 'wishing to see the world', a passion for seeing and knowing (Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.30.11-14: *gar' hemeas gar peri seo logos apiktai polles kai sofies eineken tes ges kai planes, hos philosopheon gen pollen theories heineken epeleluthas*). Cf. J. Navone, *Towards a Theology of Story*, (Slough: St. Paul, 1977), pp. 96-97. The theorist is a *sophos*, one 'skilled, knowledgeable about the world, people, customs, languages' (p. 96). His journey is 'a voyage of inquiry', and 'theorizing is a voyage to worthy sight' (Navone, p. 97). *Theoria* - a journey in search of 'divinely inspired men' (Plato, *Laws*, 951b.5-c.4; 952d.4-953e.7). *Rep.* 514-518b has journeying, as do many of the *Dialogues* (cf. the discussion in Navone, *ad.loc.*).

their quest, for, by accepting them, honour is done to 'Zeus, the Patron of Strangers', better than putting them off 'by means of meats and ceremonies... or else, by savage proclamations'.⁴³

The threat of foreign influence could come even closer to the Greek city-state, however, due to its own cultural inspectors. If such an inspector (*theoros*) should return from his cultural journey abroad with corrupted ideas, and should attempt to introduce them in the life of the city, he could face severe punishment, even death as a 'meddler in the areas of education and the laws'.⁴⁴

To a certain extent, Plato's recommendations for the ideal Greek city-state, or republic, have been well put into practice by Lycurgus, in Sparta. As Plutarch describes Lycurgus' policy, he was reluctant to let Spartans travel or live abroad and to accept foreign visitors who would be busy dealing in something else than mere commerce:

This was the reason why he did not permit them to live abroad at their pleasure and wander in strange lands, assuming foreign habits [*xenika ethe*] and imitating the lives of people who were without training [*mimemata bion apaideuton*] and lived under different forms of government. Nay, more, he actually drove away from the city the multitudes which streamed in there for no useful purpose, not because he feared they might become imitators of his form of government and learn useful lessons in virtue, as Thucydides says, but rather that they might not become in any wise teachers of evil [*didaskaloi kakou*]. For along with strange people, strange doctrines must come in; and novel doctrines bring novel decisions [*logoi de kainois kriseis kainas epipherousin*], from which there must arise many feelings and resolutions which destroy the harmony of the existing political order. Therefore he thought it more necessary to keep bad manners and customs from invading and filling the city [*phulattein ten polin hopos ethon*] than it was to keep out infectious diseases.⁴⁵

Such cultural protectionism and avoidance of foreign customs and beliefs was a more general trend for the nations of the Antiquity. For example, Herodotus writes that the Scythians would similarly avoid any cultural links with 'foreign' Hellenists, and that at least two major Scythian leaders, Anacharsis and Skyles, have suffered death as a punishment for having dared to import foreign customs, beliefs, and for worshipping the Greek gods (*Hist*, 4.76.1; 4.76.22, 4:78.1, 4.80.20). But, if the Scythians can be accused of a notorious lack of civilisation, and were regarded as the most cruel among the barbarians, the Egyptians were not far either, in terms of their attitude towards cultural import and foreigners: they also

⁴³ Plato, *Laws*, 953c.3-e.3. R. Bury notes that expelling was possible by forbidding the presence of the foreigners at ceremonial feasts (Plato, *Laws*, 953e, LCL, vol. 2, p. 514, n. 1). Theophilus, if a God-fearer of Hellenistic background, could thus have understood in a special way Luke's stress on meal fellowship in the context of Acts seen as a 'cultural exchange' (cf. 1 Cor. 10:27).

⁴⁴ Plato, *Laws*, 951d.1-952d.6.

⁴⁵ Plutarch, *Lycurgus*, xxvii.3-4.

avoided all foreign customs, as much as they could (Herodotus, *Hist*, 2.91.1).

Welcoming travellers and showing hospitality to strangers (*philoxenia*) as a sign of brotherly love (*philadelphia*), has in fact been one of the major distinctive features of Christians, and it is one of Luke's major motifs in Luke-Acts.⁴⁶ Such an openness, and with it, the evangelistic fervour, was difficult to understand by their pagan neighbours and was often ridiculed by the Greeks and Romans, and even by the Jews.⁴⁷

B. Conflicts in Acts: Two Missionary Perspectives

1. Conflicts in Luke-Acts and Luke's Missionary Paradigms

The above excursus into Plato's views on foreign influences indicates that one of Luke's main themes in Acts, the ministry of the itinerating evangelist and its cultural significance, can be seen as reflecting one of the major challenges to the first-century Hellenistic city.

Luke's work confirms that the Hellenistic towns often adopted a very Platonic policy – by no means a safe or contemplatory one – defending Graeco-Roman culture against any foreign corruption. For example, Acts 16:20-21 tells how some rich owners are antagonised by Paul's healings and proclamation of salvation and use a cultural argument against him: 'These men are disturbing our city [*ektarassousin hemon ten polin*]; they are Jews and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to adopt or observe [*ethe ha ouk exestin hemin paradechesthai oude poiein, Romaiois ousin*]'.⁴⁸ A similar argument is put forward in Ephesus (Acts 19:26-27).

From this perspective, an interesting and, to a point, an ambivalent fate, is that of Saul of Tarsus. On the one hand, Saul receives important recommendation letters from the high priests and has their support in arresting the cultural innovators who 'belonged to the Way' (Acts 8-9). On

⁴⁶ Cf. J.A. Grassi, 'Emmaus Revisited (Luke 24:13-35 and Acts 8:26-40)', *CBQ* 26 (1964), 463-65, esp. p. 465; R. Orlet, 'An Influence of the Early Liturgy Upon the Emmaus Account', *CBQ* 21 (1959), 212-219, esp. pp.216-217.

⁴⁷ This idea seemed strange to non-Christians, cf. Philo, *On Joseph*, 218; *The Embassy to Gaius*, 87; Josephus, *AJ*, 4.26; 4 Macc. 13:21, 23, 26; 14:1; 15:10; Plutarch, *Concerning Brotherly Love (Moralia 5:478A)*; Lucian of Samosata, *The Death of Peregrinus*, 12, 13, 16; *Dialogues of the Gods*, 266.2, 286; cf. W. L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, Dallas, TX: Word, 1991, p. 511; J. Thurén, *Das Lobopfer der Hebräer: Studien zum Aufbau und Anliegen von Hebräerbrief 13*, (Abo: Abo Akademi, 1973), 49-247, p. 209. To be sure, Christians themselves were not naive, but made their own rulings, cf. *The Didache*, 11,12, where any stranger who claims to come in the name of the Lord should be put to the test as to what his beliefs are, and should not stay, if he is genuine, more than two-three days, nor should he ask for money.

⁴⁸ Plato manifests a special care for the city's customs, *ethe* (*Laws*, 817a.1-e.4).

the other hand, Saul himself becomes the target of the orthodox Jews' plots, both in Damascus and in Jerusalem, a fate similar to that of 'religious inspectors' who have corrupted their teaching and started to endanger the ways of the city (Acts 23).

At the same time, Acts is replete with examples of conflicts within the church: the punishment of Ananias and Sapphira (a case for the highest ethical standards in the church); the conflict started by neglecting the Hellenist widows, so that they did not receive their fair share of relief funds; the conversion of Cornelius and Peter's debate with the brothers in Jerusalem (a case for apostolic reports, or evangelistic accountability); and the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas on whether or not to take John Mark with them on their second missionary journey.

From among these examples of NT conflicts, Luke's skills as a historian of the Church and a theologian can be noted particularly well. It can be seen in two specific cases of conflict stories, both internal to the church community: the incident with Ananias' and Sapphira's deception (Acts 5:1-11), and the conflict between Barnabas and Paul at the beginning of their second missionary journey (Acts 15:36-41). Whilst one incident occurs in Jerusalem, the first headquarters of the Christian community, the other takes place in Antioch, the second missionary capital of the early Church. One is related to a local perspective, that of the Jerusalem church, during the time when the first Christian community was being established through great wonders, effective preaching and public miracles, while the other represents an experience of the Antiochene church, as it engaged in world-wide mission. An important link between the two conflicts is Barnabas himself, a person quite often close to conflicts, in Acts, and apparently always ready to set an example, or to encourage someone in need.⁴⁹

The Ananias and Sapphira incident is narrated in the light of Barnabas' recent and memorable example: he has just sold a piece of land he owned in Jerusalem and brought the money to the apostles' feet (Acts 4:36-37). This is the first mention of Barnabas in the book of Acts, and it is related to Peter's apostolic ministry in Jerusalem. The second conflict represents the last mention of Barnabas' name in Acts, at the end of an important series of events closely related to Paul, the other apostle of

⁴⁹ The etymology is disputed. 'Barnabas' could represent a form of the Palmyrene *Bar-Nebo*, 'the son of Nebo', or comes from the Aramaic *bar-newaha*, 'son of soothing', 'son of comforting' (cf. F.F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), p. 101, and S. Brock, 'Barnabas, *huios parakleseos*', *JTS* 25 (1974), 93-98). The Greek of 4:36, *Ioseph de ho epikletheis Barnabas apo ton apostolon, ho estin methermeneuomenon huios parakleseos*, etc., raises the issue of whether it is possible to be translated as 'Joseph, the Barnabas of / from the apostles, the one called / known as the 'son of encouragement', etc.' and in this way, the text provides the reader with a surname, rather than with a translation of Barnabas' name.

Gentiles (second to Peter).⁵⁰ Peter and Paul, as major apostles of the primary church, then Barnabas, and, in this context, two internal crises of the church, are the links that present these two texts as having a definitive role for the life of the early church, a characterising function for Barnabas' character and influence.

In Barnabas' case, Luke seldom records the latter's speeches, the few extant examples being the short addresses in Acts 13:46 and 14:14-18 (in view of 14:12, it seems that during their missionary journeys, it was Paul who most often addressed the multitudes). Apart from these examples, we have summaries of Barnabas' words along with the information that he was a gifted teacher (cf. Acts 13:1), preacher (12:3; 13:5, 43, 46; 15:35), a skilled presenter (Acts 9:27, 14:27, 15:12), and a forceful debater (Acts 15:2, 39). To a large degree, one could say that Barnabas is presented in Acts as, foremost, a man of action, of *praxeis*. The acting Barnabas, more than the preaching Barnabas, constitutes an important feature of the early church, a counterpart to the proclamatory ministry of Peter and Paul. On the one hand, Luke is focusing on individual characterisation, as Hellenist historians would do, in order to present a historical period, movement, or people, and, on the other hand, he makes use of conflicts, as an indirect means of characterisation. What could be said, then, about the literary function of conflicts, in Acts? These two particular instances reiterate Luke's emphasis on Christian ethics and his focus on mission.

2. Ananias, Sapphira and their fatal Failure: A Conflict of Purity and Identity

Ananias and Sapphira apparently found it difficult to withstand the pressure of high achievement and the desire for being praised. Barnabas had just provided an influential model within the larger framework of the new Jerusalem movement. His generosity and sacrifice took place in a context when Christians, the new people of God, looked for authority, for religious credentials and social reform, for a new national and religious identity. However, in the context of extended national hypocrisy, more than once publicly accused by John the Baptist (cf. 'brood of vipers', Lk 3:7-9), or Jesus ('hypocrites', Lk 12:56; 13:15), or, later, by Christian leaders such as Stephen (who would not hesitate to call his audience 'traitors and murderers', Acts 7:52), this raised the issue of matching inner spirituality with one's external profession of faith.

The high enthusiasm in Acts 1-5 shows that Jerusalem underwent a time of profound change when many of its people experienced revival and

⁵⁰ The first apostle of the Gentiles is Peter: he is instrumental in Cornelius' conversion (Acts 10-12), and at the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15 he is recognised as one chosen by God so 'that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers.' (15:7, NRS).

prophetic fulfillment (Joel 2:28-32). The specific emphasis on the building up of a new community of God is indicated by the first occurrence, here, of *ekklesia* in Acts, in relation to the multitudes of who readily - and fearfully⁵¹ - learnt from Ananias' example (Acts 5:11).⁵² One cannot help noting that this first mention in Acts, a relatively late one compared with the birth of the church, cf. Acts 2 - out of a grand total of 23 occurrences in Acts, has similar conflict and discipline connotations as it does in Mt. 16:18, 18:17. This draws attention to the importance of *ekklesia* as an ideally organised community, of godly and high ethical standards. As a rule, the secondary literature emphasises in Acts 5 that 'by this point the followers of Jesus had a sense of being a corporate entity - the people of God'.⁵³ However, although this use of the *ekklesia* underlines the continuity between the church and the people of Israel,⁵⁴ Acts displays, in fact, at a more general level, a gradual moving away from Jerusalem and the Semitic cultural settings.⁵⁵

At the same time, this emphasis on building a new community could have been perceived, quite correctly, by a Gentile reader, as well, as being a quest for a foundational, essential reform. According to Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, there are major precedents for such a development. Lycurgus became famous for his moral and legislative reforms in Lacedaemonia, by organising, first, a council of elders (the senate), secondly, by redistributing the land and bringing uniformity and equality so that people may seek preeminence through virtue alone, not through wealth, and, thirdly, by regulating burial customs and removing the fear of death and of the dead ones, and of sepulchers, in particular.⁵⁶ It is very

⁵¹ For Aristotle, 'dramatic incidents should arise pity and fear', *phoberon kai eleeinon*, in *Poetics*, 1452b.30-33. even horror, *phrittein*, cf. *Poet.*, 1453b.5-10. Even Polybius acknowledges a certain paedagogical legitimacy to this appeal to pity and justified anger, in historical works, although he would criticise any excesses, as in the cases of Theopompus and Phylarchus (Polybius, *Hist.*, 2.56.13.4-14.1).

⁵² F.F. Bruce draws attention, (*The Book of Acts*, p. 107) that in the Western text of Acts, *ekklesia* occurs first in 2:47. See also, J. Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), p. 41. According to Bruce (*The Book of Acts*, p. 108), *kenista* is the Aramaic equivalent of the heb. *edah* ('general assembly', never translated in the LXX with *ekklesia*), and occasionally of the heb. *qahal* ('purposeful assembly', translated in the LXX both as *ekklesia* and as *synagoge*), and may lie behind Mt. 16:8 and 17:18, as, possibly, the term by which the group of Jesus' disciples was known in Jerusalem ('the *kenista* of the Nazarenes').

⁵³ B. Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles. A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1998), p. 220 (he mentions also I. H. Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary*, (Leicester: IVP, 1980), p. 114; J. B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC 26, (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), p. 161. Cf. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, pp. 107, for him *ekklesia* here would denote 'the people of Israel in the religious character as Yahweh's 'assembly''. See the discussion of this term in Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, p. 108.

⁵⁴ From this perspective, one understands well Jervell's emphasis in 'Retrospect', p. 389: 'the church is in continuation of Israel, and the apostles are the continuation of Jesus and his history'; and at p.392 'the history of the church is the history of Israel, not of the nations, whose history Luke does not even mention.'

⁵⁵ Witherington, *Acts*, p. 220. Cf. the detailed discussion in P. W. L. Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City: New Testament Perspectives on Jerusalem*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996); *idem*, *Holy City, Holy Places? Christian Attitudes to Jerusalem and the Holy Land in the Fourth Century*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990); J. E. Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places: The Myth of Jewish-Christian Origins*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993).

⁵⁶ Plutarch, *Lycurgus*, 5.6.1-2; 8.1-2; 8.4.7-12; 27.1.1-27.2.1.

probable that an educated Hellenist citizen of the *oikoumene*, one such as Theophilus, would have been able to perceive the apostles as a group of radical reformers acting according to God's revelation.

From such a point of view, the discipline of Ananias and Sapphira does not only mirror similar conflicts in the OT (LXX), *i.e.* such as the punishment of Achan, who kept a part of the consecrated spoil (Jos 7.1),⁵⁷ or that of Nadab and Abihu, who brought unholy fire before the Lord (Lev. 10:1). This conflict reinforced for Jews and Gentiles alike the understanding that the new community of believers in Christ was assisted and guided by God himself and did not represent a mere human initiative.⁵⁸

The severity of punishing the double spiritual standard indicates a sharp focus on purity among the Christians, since at Qumran, for example, similar offences were prescribed considerably milder chastisement.⁵⁹ On any account, Luke points out, apologetically, that for both Jews and Gentiles, not so much Peter is a central figure among the apostles and among the Jerusalem Christians, as it underlines that the 'God of the Hebrew Scriptures is the same God Jesus and the disciples served and so one should expect continuity of character and action'.⁶⁰

This great fear, *phobos megas*, that gripped the souls of all the rest of the people, of the *ton loipon* (Acts 5:11; cf. 15:13, 'none of the rest dared to join them'),⁶¹ might have been counter-productive as regards church membership, yet was highly effective as regards Christian ethics. Interestingly, Barnabas, known otherwise as the son of comforting and encouragement, had no opportunity at this moment to assist somebody, or help to restore some fallen or misguided inexperienced Christians, as he

⁵⁷ 'embezzled': *nosphisasthai* (Jos 7:1) and *enosphisato* (Acts 5:2) suggest a link here (F.J. Foakes-Jackson, and K. Lake (eds), *The Beginnings of Christianity*, (London: Macmillan, 1920-33), vol. 4, p. 50; cf. L.T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, (Collegeville, MN: Glazier, 1992), p. 92.

⁵⁸ As noted before, Luke emphasises the occurrence of a great fear of God (Acts 5:11, *egeneto phobos megas*), an idea that many Hellenist historians would agree with, cf. B. L. Ullman, 'History and Tragedy', *TAPA* 73 (1942), 25-53; see also Pervo's mention of A.D. Nock and M. Hengel, in *Profit*, pp. 48-50). For Polybius, however, 'the object of tragedy is not the same as that of history but quite the opposite' (*Hist.*, 2.56.11.1-2). In relation to this, 'fear' resulted from the unusual punishment of the two spouses; Christians had to take issue, in time, against pagan writers such as Phorphyry, and deny 'that Peter has called down death upon [Ananias and Sapphira [...]] [for] he merely announced God's judgment by the spirit of prophecy, that the doom of two persons might be a lesson to many' (cf. Jerome, *Epistles*, 130.14.5-6, quoted in H. Conzelmann, *The Acts of the Apostles*, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1963), p. 38). Witherington points out as well that 'the Lord has killed them, not Peter, see *exepuxen*, in 12:23, only here and Acts 12:23, of Herod (cf. Judg. 4:21 LXX)' (*Acts*, p. 216).

⁵⁹ According to 1 QS 6.24-25, cf. B.J. Capper, 'The Interpretation of Acts 5:4', *JSNT* 19 (1983), 117-31, the punishment would have included exclusion from the fellowship meal and deprivation of food. Witherington is against such parallels with Qumran, arguing that the two situations are, essentially, different (*Acts*, p. 215, note 74).

⁶⁰ Witherington, *Acts*, p. 214. He also draws attention that Codex Bezae vs. CopG67, softens Peter's question 'I will ask if you indeed sold the land for so much' (p. 218, n. 88; cf. B.M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek Testament*, London: UBS, 1971, p. 328).

⁶¹ P. H. Menoud suggests that, apart from the shock of the punishment, the first Christians realised with surprise that despite faith in Jesus, one can die even after Christ's resurrection ('La mort d'Ananias et de Sapphira (Actes 5:1-11)', in O. Cullmann and P. H. Menoud (eds), *Aux Sources de la Tradition Chretienne: Melanges offerts a M. Maurice Goguel*, (Neuchatel: Delachaux et Niestle, 1950), 146-154. Bruce thinks this is improbable (*The Books of Acts*, p. 103).

does later; he is mentioned here only to provide a powerful and contrasting ethical reference. In a plot line that tends to become characteristic of him in Acts, his model of sacrificial, generous and honest giving has been poorly followed by others, and thus, it adds to the drama of the conflict. As a historian and theologian, Luke tells his readers not only of the failure of the two spouses, but, also, he highlights the expected standards, provided by Barnabas.

3. Paul and Barnabas, or putting People before Ministry - A Conflict between Different Missionary Paradigms.

The NT pericope at Acts 15:36-41 does not introduce the reader to two different missionary agendas – since both Barnabas and Paul were sent as missionaries and continued to work as Antiochene ministers in charge of foreign mission. This conflict alerts the reader to two different priorities, instead: whilst Barnabas considered the ways in which he could help restore a backsliding youth, such as John Mark, Paul focused his mind entirely on how to affirm clearer ethical standards and build a new overseas team, more stable and more dedicated to mission, ready to go successfully through all possible further trials and persecution. Barnabas seems left alone here, as regards his pastoral concerns, for the Jerusalem church appears to have endorsed Paul's course of action, together with his choice of Silas. Even Luke, far from being critical, affirms the importance of Paul's ongoing ministry, focusing from this point onwards only on Paul.

The pastoral missionary paradigm of Barnabas, however, cannot be dismissed so easily. One could get a better understanding of the nature of this conflict by looking in greater detail at the root of this church conflict, namely at John Mark's decision to desert his team, during the first missionary journey in Cyprus and Asia Minor (in Perga, Pamphylia, after sailing from Paphos, Cyprus, Acts 13:13). Paul's accusation against Mark sounds very harsh, since he calls him - *ton apostanta ap' auton ton Pamphulias* - the apostate one, the one who deserted them in Pamphylia⁶² - *kai me sunelthonta autois eis ton ergon* - and who did not accompany them in the work. The western text of Acts has a longer reading, implying high expectations for all the missionaries, at the beginning of the first mission: 'he did not accompany them in the work for which they had been sent' ...⁶³

What catches the reader's attention here is Luke's choice of *paroxusmos* for their dispute, denoting a sharp disagreement and severe irritation (it also occurs in the LXX, in Deut. 29:28, and Jer. 32:37). As F. F. Bruce puts it, 'Luke does not portray his heroes as free from human

⁶² Witherington, *Acts*, p. 472.

⁶³ Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, p. 440; E. Delebecque, 'Silas, Paul et Barnabe a Antioche selon le text "Occidental" d'Actes 15,34 et 38', *RHPR* 64 (1984), 47-52.

passions'.⁶⁴ The magnitude of the disagreement is perceived better when one realises that his quarrel is a point of no return for Paul and Barnabas as a missionary team. From 15:19 onwards Barnabas will not be mentioned again in Acts. This detail appears to support the views according to which Acts 15 is a pivotal chapter in Luke's second volume, a watershed for Paul's ministry.⁶⁵ To what extent this incident is related to Paul's other dispute with Barnabas and Peter, as reported in Gal. 2.11-13, is an issue open to scholarly debates.⁶⁶ One should note that Luke's narrative deals directly with the dynamic course of the church missionary ministry, and provides an important and realistic rationale for it, reflecting Paul's and Barnabas' highly principled agendas, rather than presenting a dispute regarding the role of the Law in Gentile evangelism (the more, this issue has been discussed in the first part of Acts 15).

From a narrative point of view, Barnabas' decision to stay with John Mark re-affirms Luke's paradigmatic view of Barnabas in Acts: this man remains known throughout Acts as the 'son of comforting', the one of apostolic prestige and influence. In John Mark's case, as well as in that of Paul himself when the latter had been living a forgotten life in Tarsus for approximately 9 years (Acts 11:25-26, *cf.* 9:27), Barnabas is the man of risky decisions, oriented towards a different missionary paradigm than Paul, a paradigm focused on rehabilitating and restoring young ministers of special potential. It is important that Luke presents, thus, these two missionary directions, in full awareness of their occasional conflict, and in an entirely transparent manner.

Instead of Conclusions

It is clear by now that Luke's interest in conflicts goes beyond mediating between Petrine and Pauline factions. First, he is not far from the stylistic choices of many Hellenist historians who were ready to use such events as one of their major literary sources. At the same time, however, Luke's realism and his interest in the diversity of missionary directions constitutes

⁶⁴ F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of The Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary*, (Leicester: Apollos, 1990), p. 259.

⁶⁵ C. H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes and the Genre of Luke-Acts*, Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1974, p. 15. Luke uses a complex narrative plot, with superimposed narrative structures. For example, one cannot overlook the pivotal importance of Acts 8:26-9:31, which prepares the opening of the Gentile mission, with chs. 10-12; *cf.* D. P. Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet: The Literary and Theological Significance of the Lukan Travel Narrative*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1989), pp. 296-297, 304-305; see also, R. Morgenthaler, *Lukas und Quintilian. Rhetorik als Erzählkunst*, Zürich: Gotthelf Verlag, 1993, pp. 353, 351-352; idem, *Die lukanische Geschichtsschreibung als Zeugnis. Gestalt und Gehalt der Kunst des Lukas*, Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, vol. 1, 1948, p. 163. The traditional division of Acts is 1-12, 13-28 (*cf.* E. Zeller, *The Acts of the Apostles*, (London: Williams and Norgate, 1875-76) (2 vols.); against it argues P. H. Menoud, 'Le Plan des Actes des Apôtres', *NTS* 1 (1954), 44-51).

⁶⁶ *Cf.* the discussion in E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), pp. 475-477.

important evidence of a fine theological and sociological mind, and of a complex understanding of the early Church mission.

Even if Barnabas remains a secondary character in the book of Acts, Luke presents him in a very positive light (for example, there are two special summaries in relation to him, one in Acts 4:36, and one in 11:24). By referring to Barnabas, Luke succeeds in presenting the ethical standards of the new people of God as well as their limitations. It is in this state of limited human resources that God's grace is being manifested.

Barnabas' different approach to mission, although secondary to Paul's later focus on foreign countries (*cf.* that Paul's first missionary journey, undertaken together with Barnabas, started with a visit to Cyprus, Barnabas' home, and continued with a visit to Asia Minor near Tarsus, *i.e.* near Paul's hometown), is nevertheless a fruitful approach, both through its focus on a 'small steps forward' programme and on encouraging young ministers. Barnabas' long term care for young Christians included the fact that Paul himself was helped in this way, and similarly, John Mark (the 'Saul' project started in Acts 9 went well, and, further, Col 4:10 suggests that the 'John Mark' project was also successful, even after Barnabas' death, around AD 61-62. Paul's reference to Barnabas in 1 Cor 9:5-6 apparently indicates that their friendship continued unimpaired, long after the incident in Acts 15, approx. AD 49-50).

In the end, Barnabas' paradigm, if encouraging, remains, though, an unsettling one, due to its sharp realism. Both in Ananias' case and in that of John Mark, he sets two positive examples, which people failed to follow appropriately. Ananias has copied his generosity only in appearance, not in its essential honesty. Paul, too, has preferred drastic measures against John Mark, rather than offering him a new chance, although he has just recently benefited from such a change, offered to him by Barnabas (in Timothy's case, however, Paul will change his views: understanding the need for training new ministers, he will supervise Timothy until he grows into an efficient pastor). With such stories, Luke succeeds in accomplishing the task of a fair-minded historian, writing 'to instruct and convince [*didaxai kai peisai*]'.⁶⁷ For him conflicts are not only a major literary source; he enables his readers to realise through his thoughtful choice of events and emphases, the importance of different church mission programmes, of winning new converts, of building up the established communities, and of encouraging new ministers.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Polybius, *Hist.*, 2.56.11.2.

⁶⁸ I would like to use this opportunity to express my thanks to the Revd K. G. Jones, the Revd Dr I. M. Randall, and the Revd Dr P. R. Parushev for their kind invitation and support during the two weeks of research undertaken at IBTS, Prague, in February 2001.

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