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## CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

### 8.1 Mapping the road travelled

The impetus for this study arose from a conviction that the unique features of Luke's narrative world most likely yield clues on how to handle conflict and work for reconciliation. The method of investigation, however, was to be neither exclusively inductive or deductive, but abductive. That is, we intended to engage in a constant dialogue with the text as we proceeded to read Luke's narrative. Theses were to be developed and put forward. These were in turn to be scrutinised by a continuing back-and-forth movement in which passages read and knowledge gained were to be juxtaposed with new passages. The hope was that out of this reading a picture would emerge which, within the parameters of scientific research, would contribute to help solve some of the puzzles we encounter as we read Luke's narrative, and at the same time inspire new dialogue. At social and political levels the hope was that the knowledge gained would provide encouraging insight into the manner how to view and handle the conflicts that characterise every society.

The study was inspired by new perceptions concerning the concept metaphor, accentuating the aptness of metaphor to challenge and subvert fixed perceptions of reality. This insight on metaphor was based on a radical revision of traditional perceptions of metaphor. Metaphor is not merely ornamental, illustrative of knowledge already gained, but is also *creative* of knowledge. The creative power of metaphor lies primarily in the tension it creates when not similarities (epiphor), but dissimilarities (diaphor) are juxtaposed. Such a juxtaposition sparks new thought. This new thought, which in essence leads to a new way of looking at reality, is essential when peoples or a society are in engaged in conflict and strife. Past studies on the sociology of knowledge, and indeed the study of metaphor itself, have stressed how peoples are governed by particular worldviews. Conflict indeed reveals contrasting and exclusive

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worldviews. An awareness of worldviews which are implicitly articulated in texts is therefore imperative in the process of conflict resolution. These aspects were explored and confirmed.

In this study metaphor was used as a “model”, that is, as a “lens” to look at different aspects of our research. The use of a model in itself implies that the study was not to be governed by deductive argumentation that pretends to provide a whole or conclusive picture on the research topic. The study was rather an effort to look at the topic of research from a particular point of view, and provide new language with which to describe, or re-describe, the phenomena that constitute the subject of research.

The metaphor was in the past applied to Jesus' parables primarily by historical Jesus scholars. The awareness raised of the subversive nature of Jesus' parables is a tribute to their work. It has revitalised parable research. Despite the recent critiques of some scholars, we concluded that Jesus' parables are indeed metaphorical in nature, challenging conventional worldviews. However, scholars have in the past largely failed to apply the notion of metaphor to the parables in the form in which they have been imported or recreated in the Gospel narratives. Some historical Jesus scholars have advocated that in their Gospel setting the parables have lost their essential metaphorical character, that is, they no longer function as metaphors. Based on the conviction that the reasons for this view are not compelling, we turned our attention to Luke's narrative.

The very choice of studying the parables in Luke's narrative was based on past research which had indicated Luke's affinity for the juxtaposing of opposites. This was explored in depth, both at literary and contextual levels. Indeed, it became clear that the juxtaposition of opposites and the ensuing unexpected reversal of fortune form part of Luke's literary style. Furthermore, exploration of Luke's contextual world revealed a world marked by strife and conflict. Importantly, however, our reading indicated that in an exploration of the

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juxtaposition of opposites, attention should not fall exclusively on people or groups of people, but rather on the worldviews that characterise these people. Juxtaposed in Luke's narrative are contrasting points of view. These views were described as conventional Israelite wisdom and the alternative wisdom of Jesus' Kingdom teaching. The former is inherently particularistic and exclusive, the latter universalistic and inclusive. The former reflects a worldview in which God's holiness is interpreted in terms of purity regulations and is characterised by group-differentiation and divisions. In the latter, God's holiness is interpreted in terms of his mercy and is characterised by the inclusiveness of God's family. Conventional exclusive boundaries are extended to include everyone. In the drawing of the new boundaries we recognised Luke's endeavour to work for reconciliation. The reversal of roles and fortune were not to lead to a new form of exclusivity, but were to function as "metaphor" to create a revised and inclusive vision of God. In God's kingdom "all" are welcome.

In the closing chapters our attention fell on three parables that are peculiar to Luke. The exposition of the parables confirmed Luke's affinity for the juxtaposition of opposites within a background of tension. In each parable different and socially and religiously exclusive characters are used. A pious Levite/priest is juxtaposed with a hated Samaritan, a rebellious younger son with an apparently obedient elder son, a sumptuously rich man with a desperately poor man. In each case the juxtaposition reflects the conventional dichotomy between "insiders" and "outsiders", those "loved by God" and "those hated by God". It is intrinsically related to a Pharisaic interpretation of the Law of God and forms the basis of conventional Israelite wisdom. But this conventional view is continually juxtaposed with an alternative view in which the clearly defined boundaries indicating "who is in" and "who is out" are confused by the drawing of a new map.

The characters within the parables play a subordinate role to the worldviews articulated by them. The characters serve to define the focal point of the challenge, be it the division between nations (The Good Samaritan), or that

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between family members (A Man Had Two Sons), or that caused by "social classes" (The Rich Man and Lazarus). Invariably, the parables being metaphors, the challenge is not one-dimensional, but multidimensional and can impact on various facets of human life. Similarly, the references evoked by the characters in the parables are not restrictive to any one particular entity in a direct one-to-one relationship, but are often ambiguous and/or multi-referential. This constitutes the very essence of metaphor and makes it so apt for introduction in different contexts. Our focus in this study however fell on the challenge that the Lukan metaphorical stories posed to a conventional worldview, implicitly articulated by each and every text. Because of this focus, we refrained from closely defining the precise composition of the group who constituted the Lukan community. That can be the focus of another study. This study is not about a particular group of people contrasted with another group of people, but about deeply imbedded worldviews which become most visible when people of different worldviews are challenged by the emergence of a new social order.

There is little doubt that Luke contributed greatly to defining the symbolic universe of this new order. He did so by juxtaposing contrasting worlds, challenging his audience to see reality differently. It is a world in which God's mercy rules, traditional divisions are broken down, and conventional boundaries are crossed. It is a world "turned upside down" through the realisation that this world, for many so foreign and seemingly unattractive, is the "Kingdom of God" that has dawned in our midst. It is the world in which God and humankind are reconciled with one another.

## **8.2 Concluding remarks**

In the introduction (chapter 1) reference was made to South Africa, the country in which I live. It is a country which today, eight years after the new political dispensation appeared, still struggles with numerous inner and outer struggles and conflicts. The struggles can in part be traced back to a worldview in which

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group-differentiation and division were the order of the day. It was a world of exclusivity and particularity. But a new dispensation is not necessarily the result of a new vision of reality. Without a new and a revised vision, the new dispensation may be restricted to a “power exchange” and a “polar reversal” of fortunes. Former insiders become outsiders, and outsiders become insiders: “Transformation”, however, will in essence not have been achieved. The present conflicts in South Africa are an indication of a society engaged in the struggles attendant on all change, the abandonment of old systems and the acceptance of new ones. This study creates an awareness of divergent worldviews and maintains that the best way to work for reconciliation is the telling of stories, be it real-life stories, or fictional stories based on the everydayness of life. For a new vision to emerge, contrasting stories need to be juxtaposed. In the Lukan manner, the story I would like to tell, is that of a God who has mercy on all, who crosses any conventional boundaries that define the identity specific to an ethnic group or a “social class”, and creates a world, a family, in which divergent people find their identity in God who loves them all.