

ENGAGING WITH SOME VIOLENT TEXTS IN LUKE IN CONVERSATION WITH HANS KLEIN

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Abstract. This paper engages in dialogue with Hans Klein on three Lukan texts that touch on the topic of war and destruction: the parable of the king pondering to go to war (14,31-32), the parable of the throne claimant (19,12.14-15a.27), and Jesus' lament over the destruction of Jerusalem, preserving the memory of the first Roman war. These passages touch on the issue of war only incidentally and raise more problems than they solve.

Keywords: Gospel of Luke, war, peace, violence in the Bible, divine violence.

It is probably safe to say that, considering the level, the national and international recognition and the range of his scholarship, Hans Klein is the most prominent New Testament scholar of Romania. His exegetical writings attest a clear focus on the Gospel of Luke,² a very robust involvement with the Corpus Paulinum,³ and an interest in several other topics.⁴ The international visibility and impact of his work is also due to his solid formation in the best German exegetical tradition and to the fact that his writings have appeared at prominent publishers and in the most important international journals. But he has also published extensively in Romanian, contributing

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- ² Hans KLEIN, *Das Lukasevangelium* (KEK 1.3), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006; *Lukasstudien* (FRLANT 209), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005; *Barmherzigkeit gegenüber den Elenden und Geächteten. Studien zur Botschaft des lukanischen Sonderguts* (BThS 10), Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1987, to mention only the most important.
- ³ *Entwicklungslinien im Corpus Paulinum und weitere Studien zu Paulustexten*, edited by Tobias NICKLAS, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016; *Der erste Korintherbrief*, Sibiu/Hermannstadt: Honterus, 2013; *Der zweite Korintherbrief*, Sibiu/Hermannstadt: Honterus, 2015; *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater*, Sibiu/Hermannstadt: Honterus, 2020; *Der zweite Timotheusbrief*, Sibiu/Hermannstadt: Honterus, 2024; *I și 2 Corinteni – traducere și comentariu*, Oradea: Casa Cărții, 2021.
- ⁴ The Gospel of Matthew: *Bewährung im Glauben. Studien zum Sondergut des Evangelisten Matthäus*, (BThSt 26), Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1996; *Die Bergpredigt einst und heute. Eine allgemeinverständliche Auslegung*, Sibiu/Hermannstadt: Honterus, 2017; the Synoptics gospels in general: *Teologia evangheliilor sinoptice*, Oradea: Casa Cărții, 2024, as well as ancient religion and mentality: *Kleine Geschichte der antiken griechischen Religion und Denkweise*, Sibiu/Hermannstadt: Honterus Verlag, 2016.

significantly to the progress of biblical research in Romania. Deeply ecumenically minded, Hans Klein has been committed to fostering biblical scholarship in Romania and to the dialogue between Western and Eastern scholars, not least as president of the Association of Biblical Scholars of Romania (AUBR), as a member of the Eastern European Liaison Committee (EELC) of the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas (SNTS) and as organiser of 62nd General Meeting of the SNTS in Sibiu in 2007. The Centre for Biblical Studies is particularly indebted to him, as he has been a constant presence at our conferences, the executive editor of *Sacra Scripta* for many years, and not least a friend of all of us.

What struck me in the many conversations we had over the past almost twenty years was his creative thinking, his imaginativeness and his ingenious ideas. To Hans, biblical texts are never abstract. He has vivid ideas about the Corinthian community and its problems at worship, about women in the earliest communities or about the concrete acts of charity the widows mentioned in 1 Timothy performed. Listening to Hans, the people belonging to the earliest communities come to life.

In what follows I wish to engage in dialogue with Hans Klein on three Lukan texts that touch on the topic of war and destruction: the parable of the king pondering to go to war (14,31-32), the parable of the throne claimant (19,12.14-15a.27), and Jesus' lament over the destruction of Jerusalem, preserving the memory of the first Roman war. Hans Klein's interpretation of these three passages has come to my attention three years ago, as I was writing a paper on war and peace-making in Luke, motivated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.⁵ Here, I will focus on Hans Klein's interpretation of these texts in his commentary on Luke. Subsequently, I will raise some questions that could invite for further reflection on the topic.

1. War and Peace in Luke 14,31-32

One of the passages which (at least on surface) touch on the issue of war is the parable of the two kings (14,31-32). The parable follows upon that of the tower-builder (vv. 28-30).⁶ Both are integrated in the exhortation addressing the following of Jesus. Klein remarks with good reason that the composition is not unitary and reveals editorial intervention: vv. 26-27 discuss the conditions for following Jesus

⁵ "Suing for Peace at Any Cost? Reading the Parable of the Two Kings (Luke 14.31–2) in Times of War", *NTS* 70.1 (2024) 1–22. I will rehearse here some ideas but focus more closely on the work of Hans Klein.

⁶ On Luke's penchant for twin stories: KLEIN, *Lukas*, 514; also remarked by François BOVON, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas (Lk 9,51-14,35)* (EKK III/2), Zürich: Benziger / Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1996, 529–530, and Michael WOLTER, *The Gospel According to Luke II (Luke 9:51–24)* (tr. W. COPPINS, C. HEILIG), Waco, TX: Baylor University Press / Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017, 229.

and envision discipleship as complete renunciation (just as v. 33), whereas the parables (vv. 28-32) invite prudent consideration and caution.⁷

The parable of the tower builder would envision a farmer or vineyard owner who plans to erect a watchtower,⁸ – a peaceful undertaking. Klein refers in a footnote to Derrett’s military interpretation of the parable of the tower builder, as an allegory of the holy war waged by the Messiah, but does not seem to embrace it. Indeed, while a military reading of both parables is not impossible,⁹ such sense is not explicit. It seems likelier that the twin parables parallel the peaceful endeavour of building and a military venture, as in other ancient sources.¹⁰

Both parables caution against the costs of failure: an unsuccessful building project would result in shame, and a failed military campaign would lead to the loss of life.¹¹ (In fact, it should be noted, that the latter is perhaps implied but not spelled out.) Klein is right that the decision is open¹² (one might add, despite the emphasis on the negative consequence of failure). Thus, the king could go to war even after carefully considering the superior military capabilities of the enemy. The matter is not decided: throughout history, examples of a small force defeating an overwhelming army are known; this may happen for instance by luring the enemy into an ambush. Klein refers

⁷ KLEIN, *Lukas*, 45, 512–513. Also Adolf JÜLICHER, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu II. Auslegung der Gleichnisreden der drei ersten Evangelien*, Freiburg / Leipzig / Tübingen: Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1899, 209; Joachim JEREMIAS, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, ¹¹1998, 105; Charles H. DODD, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, Glasgow: Collins, 1961, repr. 1988, 86; WOLTER, *Luke II*, 227; Klyne SNODGRASS, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, ²2018, 298–299; Gerhard SELLIN, “Die Kosten der Nachfolge (Das Doppelgleichnis vom Turmbau und vom Krieg) – Lk 14,28-32”, in *Kompendium der Gleichnisse Jesu*, edited by Ruben ZIMMERMANN, Gütersloh: Gütersloher, 2007, 604–609 (608). Klein adds that v. 33 was also edited to match vv. 26b.27b and thinks that originally it must have read: “Whoever cannot renounce everything he has, let him not begin with it [with the renunciation of possessions]”, a view also found in Acts 5,4.

⁸ KLEIN, *Lukas*, 515–516. For a watchtower see also JÜLICHER, *Gleichnisreden II*, 202; BOVON, *Lukas*, II, 538; I. Howard MARSHALL, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC), Exeter: Pater Noster, 1978, 593.

⁹ J. Duncan M. DERRETT, ‘Nisi Dominus Aedificaverit Domum: Towers and Wars (Lk XIV 28-32)’, *NovT* 19 (1977) 241–261 (251–254); Michael P. KNOWLES, “‘Everyone Who Hears These Words of Mine’: Parables on Discipleship (Matt 7:24-27//Luke 6:47-49; Luke 14:28-33; Luke 17:7-10; Matt 20:1-16)”, in *Challenge of Jesus’ Parables*, edited by Richard N. LONGENECKER, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000, 286–305 (292–293).

¹⁰ Prov 24,3-6, Qoh 3,2.8, Onas., *Strat.* 4.3-4 (LCL 156).

¹¹ KLEIN, *Lukas*, 513–514, 516.

¹² KLEIN, *Lukas*, 516; also BOVON, *Lukas II*, 530. *Pace* WOLTER, *Luke II*, 229.

here to the brave fight and prayer of the warriors of 1 Macc 4,29.¹³ To be sure, Klein notes, participating in a military campaign requires both courage and sound judgment.¹⁴

Klein argues with good reason that συμβαλεῖν means clashing with, encountering with, not starting a war.¹⁵ It is the other king that comes against our king.¹⁶ In fact, asking for peace would be pointless if our king would be the aggressor.¹⁷

The king is expected to consider the option of sending a delegation to ask for peace (τὰ πρὸς εἰρήνην), should he fear that he cannot withstand the assault. Klein notes that the parallel from TestJud 9,7 indicates that such a plea would lead to surrender and would be easier to negotiate before a battle had taken place.¹⁸ Klein does not argue, however, as others do, that this would be the only sensible decision when facing a far larger army.¹⁹

To sum up, Klein makes a number of pertinent observations. Our king does not start the war. In spite of the emphasis on careful consideration, the matter is not decided. The fate of a battle does not depend only on the size of the armies, but can be influenced by courage, prayer, or tactics. As the parable is discussed in a commentary, not in a paper discussing the topic of war and peace in Luke, these observations are mostly found in footnotes. For the same reason, the consequences of these observations are not spelled out. Nonetheless, they deserve to be considered. Thus, starting a war would mean an invasion, a war of aggression, whereas facing the aggressor would mean a defensive war: thus, our king defends his country and his people. Intention matters, in particular for the ethical assessment of a war. Defensive wars fall in a different category than the wars of aggression. Further, it is noteworthy, that the parable of the king going to war does not speak about the consequences of surrendering to the enemy without a fight. Subjugation by the aggressor would also

¹³ KLEIN, *Lukas*, 516, n. 38. Also DERRETT, ‘Nisi Dominus’, 256; BOVON, *Lukas II*, 543.

¹⁴ KLEIN, *Lukas*, 516 („Da braucht es nicht nur Mut, sondern einen klaren Kopf.“).

¹⁵ KLEIN, *Lukas*, 516, n. 36 (‘zusammenlegen’, ‘zusammenwerfen’, ‘zusammentreffen’, ‘zusammenstoßen’ (‘nicht ‘Krieg eröffnen’)), pointing to 1 Macc 4,34; 2 Macc 8,23; 14,17; Jos., *Ant.* 12.222. Pace BOVON, *Lukas II*, 541, n. 96.

¹⁶ KLEIN, *Lukas*, 516, with n. 36. Also, DERRETT, ‘Nisi Dominus’, 254. For ἐρχεσθαι ἐπί as attacking: WOLTER, *Luke II*, 231.

¹⁷ Rightly, KLEIN, *Lukas*, 516, n. 36 (‘eine Bitte um Frieden wäre unnötig, wenn man selbst den Krieg beginnt’). JÜLICHER had argued the same: our king would wage war against the foreign ruler not out of a desire for conquest, but to defend his independence, as the latter was already marching against him (*Gleichnisreden II*, 205).

¹⁸ KLEIN, *Lukas*, 517, nn. 40-41. He rejects the interpretation “asking about one’s wellbeing” (2 Sam 8,10; 11,7). There is no discussion of the variant reading ἐρωτᾷ εἰρήνην (P⁷⁵) and of the different meanings of the two readings (asking for the terms of peace vs asking for peace).

¹⁹ BOVON, *Lukas II*, 542.

involve the loss of lives, of freedom, economic spoliation (paying a tribute), devastation, shame, the loss of cultural identity and memory.²⁰

Writing in a period profoundly shaped by the Pax Romana, Luke could have been acquainted with the dire consequences of surrendering to the Roman military, the dreadful fate of women and children, the enslavement of the defeated and the plunder of their cities.²¹ The desolation following Roman conquest could not have been described more eloquently than by Tacitus' Calgacus:

“Theft, slaughter, and plunder they [Romans] falsely term empire; where they create a wasteland, they call it peace”.²²

On the other hand, engaging in defence could offer a chance to preserve the freedom of the country and of its citizens. As Klein notes, examples are well known.

From a broader perspective, the parable could seem to advise against the idea of engaging in war, although our king faces a military aggression. This could almost make Luke a pacifist.²³ To be sure, Klein does not argue that much. In a note, he remarks that Josephine Massyngbaerde Ford would like to interpret the entire parable in a pacifist manner,²⁴ without further comments. The wording of the remark does not suggest full adherence to the view (even when no strong disagreement either).

Klein considers that the parable goes back to Jesus,²⁵ but does not elaborate on its probable original intention. Instead, noting that unlike in the Maccabean wars, the

²⁰ See HAYS, “Hating”, 56–57; MARSHALL, *Luke*, 594; Barbara E. REID, Shelly MATTHEWS, *Luke 10–24* (Wisdom Commentary 43B), Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2021, 435.

²¹ On the violent pacification, humiliation, and spoliation of the vanquished after their surrender (*deditio*): Jörg RÜPKE, *Peace and War in Rome. A Religious Construction of Warfare* (tr. David M. B. RICHARDSON), Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2019, 215–216; Carlin A. BARTON, “The Price of Peace in Ancient Rome”, in *War and Peace in the Ancient World*, edited by Kurt A. RAAFLAUB, Malden, MA – Oxford: Blackwell, 2007, 245–255; Nathan ROSENSTEIN, “War and Peace, Fear and Reconciliation at Rome”, in the same volume, 226–244 (227–228, 234–236).

²² Tac., *Agr.* 30.6; ROSENSTEIN, “War and Peace”, 228.

²³ Josephine MASSYNGBAERDE FORD, *My Enemy Is My Guest: Jesus and Violence in Luke*, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010, 106. On peace as a feature of Luke: Matthias BECKER, *Lukas und Dion von Prusa: Das lukanische Doppelwerk im Kontext paganer Bildungsdiskurse* (Studies in Cultural Contexts of the Bible 3), Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2020, 364–367; Mark Allan POWELL, *What are They Saying about Luke?*, New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1989, 89–91; John H. YODER, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, ²1994, 11, 21–88; Willard M. SWARTLEY, *Covenant of Peace: The Missing Peace in New Testament Theology and Ethics*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006, 123–151.

²⁴ KLEIN, *Lukas*, 517, n. 41, referring to MASSYNGBAERDE FORD, *My Enemy*, 105–106.

²⁵ KLEIN, *Lukas*, 514.

parable does not consider circumstances that could have led to victory, he argues that Jesus and his followers had little real interest in actual warfare.²⁶

Elsewhere, in an essay on Jesus and politics,²⁷ Klein argues that Jesus' message was somewhat militant, at least in a spiritual sense. Among others, he evokes GThom 98 (the parable of the *megistanes*), a saying he regards genuine. He parallels it with the parables in Luke 14,28-32 (at least in terms of structure). He supposes that the Synoptics omitted the saying because it might have been misunderstood as endorsing violence. Klein also discovers a certain subversiveness in Jesus' position towards political power. (Jesus' message about the proximity of the Kingdom of God calls into question earthly power and the permanence of the state.) This explains why political authorities put Jesus to death, even though he had no political interests whatsoever. Luke on the other hand defends Jesus from the charge of insubordination against Roman authorities. Further, Luke's version of Jesus' saying about not bringing peace avoids any allusion to warlike pursuits. (Even so, Klein shows, the Christian message is uncomfortable to authoritarian regimes and dictators.) Klein does not discuss here Luke's view on the first Jewish-Roman war.

2. Violence and war in Luke 19

The topic of violence and war returns in Luke 19, in the parable of the throne claimant (vv. 12, 14-15a, 27) and in Jesus' lament over the fate of Jerusalem (vv. 41-42).

The returning king punishing his opponents

Klein regards the story of the throne claimant a secondary theme that Luke integrated in the parable of the minas. This narrative thread is meant to introduce the rejection of Jesus, the royal Messiah, which will be developed starting with v. 19. To that aim, Klein argues, Luke uses a known motif, the attempt to prevent the investiture of a king (*Königseinsetzung*) and transforms thereby the parable of the minas into an allegory.²⁸ The original version (*Urfassung*) of the parable goes back to

²⁶ KLEIN, *Lukas*, 516, n. 38 (“Das Beispiel zeigt, wie wenig wirkliches Interesse Jesus und seine Tradenten am eigentlichen Kriegswesen hatten.”).

²⁷ Hans KLEIN, “Jesus und der römische Staat in der Sicht des Lukasevangeliums zugleich ein Beitrag zum Verhältnis von Kirche und Staat”, *Sacra Scripta* 2 (2015) 139–152; “Jesus and the Roman State in Luke's Gospel: A Contribution to the Discussion about Church and State”, in *Reading the Political in Jewish and Christian Texts* (BiTS 38), edited by Julia A. SNYDER and Korinna ZAMFIR, Leuven: Peeters, 2020, 179–192.

²⁸ KLEIN, *Lukas*, 606. This narrative thread brought with it the remark that the servants were put in charge of ten or five cities (vv. 17, 19). The story may have been an independent parable: Francis D. WEINERT, “The Parable of the Throne Claimant (Luke 19:12, 14-15a, 27) Reconsidered”, *CBQ* 39 (1977) 505–514 (505–506); Jan LAMBRECHT, “Q-Influence on Mark 8,34–9,1”, in *Logia: Les paroles de Jésus – The Sayings of Jesus. Mémorial Joseph Coppens* (BETL 59), edited by Joël DELOBEL; Leuven: Peeters, 1982, 277–304 (296); WOLTER, *Luke II*, 351–352. For a detailed

Jesus, (i.e. the form that did not include the secondary thread of the throne claimant), and was interpreted eschatologically already in Q.²⁹

The departure of the nobleman to take hold of royal power and his later return is an allegory of Jesus' death and resurrection, his seizing the kingdom of heaven and the Parousia.³⁰ In this allegorical reading, the citizens who want to obstruct the royal aspirations of the nobleman are the pious of Israel, motivated by hatred against Jesus.³¹ They intervene because they do not want him to become king: they attempt to thwart Jesus' mission. The plot of Jesus' enemies fails, as he returns as king.³² They will be severely punished ("blutig bestraft", noting the meaning of *κατασφάζω*, to slaughter). The punishment of the opponents refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, to the bloodbath that took place there.³³ Only the enemies of Christ, those who do not want to accept him as king, are punished (Christians who fail to fulfil their mission are harmed but not damned, as in 1 Cor 3,15).³⁴

Klein mentions the bloody slaying of the enemies but does not elaborate on the violence of the image. The allegorical-eschatological interpretation, which equates the return of the king and the execution of his opponents with the Parousia and the last judgement, may diminish the sense of unease. However, envisioning Jesus as the king who has his foes slaughtered in his presence is disturbing.³⁵ No doubt, a commentary

discussion of the matter: Adelbert DENAUX, "The 'Parable of the King-Judge' in Luke-XIX,12-28 and its relation to the 'Entry Story' of Luke XIX,29-44 (On the tradition-historical relationship between Matthean and Lukan narrative form and function)", *ZNW* 93.1-2 (2002) 35-57. For a confirmation of the allegorical interpretation: Simon GATHERCOLE, "Does the Parable of the Minas Address the Delay of the Parousia? Luke 19,11-27 in its Lukan, Rhetorical and Roman Settings", *ZNW* 115.1 (2024) 19-50.

²⁹ The parable, shared with Matt 25,14-30, comes from Q. KLEIN, *Lukas*, 607.

³⁰ KLEIN, *Lukas*, 608.

³¹ The story may be an allusion to the delegation of Jews at the time of Archelaus, but Luke has no interest in historical digressions. KLEIN, *Lukas*, 609, with n. 32. On the possible historical background, also WOLTER, *Luke II*, 352, 354-356, 361; DENAUX, "Parable", 53-54.

³² KLEIN, *Lukas*, 609. Others have taken the citizens to allude to the Galilean critics of Jesus (WEINERT, "Parable") or specifically to Jewish authorities (François BOVON, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas (Lk 15,1-19,27)* (EKK III/3), Zürich: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2001, 289).

³³ KLEIN, *Lukas*, 611. Also, Vittorio FUSCO, "'Point of View' and 'Implicit Reader' in Two Eschatological Texts. (Lk 19,11-28; Acts 1,6-8)", in *The Four Gospels. FS Frans Neiryneck II* (BETL 100), edited by Frans VAN SEGBROECK, Cristopher M. TUCKETT, Gilbert VAN BELLE and Joseph VERHEYDEN, Leuven: Peeters, 1992, 1677-1696 (1689); DENAUX, "Parable", 55; ID., "The Parable of the Talents/Pounds", in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus* (BETL 158), edited by Andreas LINDEMANN, Leuven: Peeters, 2001, 329-460 (459); GATHERCOLE, "Parable of the Minas", 29-30.

³⁴ KLEIN, *Lukas*, 611.

³⁵ On Jesus as the king acting violently: WOLTER, *Luke II*, 355-356, 361-362. On the act of violence: BOVON, *Lukas III*, 299.

is not the place to discuss in detail the theological implications of texts. A commentary should illuminate the rhetoric and intent of the text. But further reflection is needed.

The destruction of Jerusalem

Luke 19,41-42 recounts Jesus' lament over the impending destruction of Jerusalem. Klein comments the passage in line with Luke' rhetoric and intention, without discussing the difficulties raised by the text. Jesus foresees the catastrophe that is about to befall the city, announced earlier, in the parable of the minas. Jesus' weeping over the city, his loud lament, foreshadows and anticipates the lament over the dead during the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus, the King of Israel, suffers with his people on account of the punishment that awaits them, following their failure to welcome him. They will have to bear the consequences of this rejection. Jesus voices a final appeal to Israel to come to her senses.³⁶ However, Israel will find no peace, because the Pharisees (unlike the crowd), have failed to understand. Salvation remains hidden from them by God. Klein notes the tragic dimension of the tension between responsibility and the people's inability to see, to recognise Jesus, i.e. to recognise that which leads to peace (τὰ πρὸς εἰρήνην, 19,42, as in 14,32).³⁷ Peace would mean here averting the war and its horrors, which will occur as a punishment of God for Jesus' rejection by the people of God. Salvation comes through death and resurrection. The coming war is hinted at in a prophetic manner, in the references to the besieging of the city. The city and its inhabitants (literally, 'her children') will be destroyed, in an act of divine judgment. The demolition of the walls suggests the depopulation of the city. Jerusalem will become a dead city because it failed to recognise the moment of grace, the visitation of Jesus. Luke knows, as did early Christians, that rejecting the salvation God offered in Jesus brings about disaster.³⁸

There is no question that Luke explains the devastation of Jerusalem by the Roman army as an act of divine retribution and retaliation.³⁹ This means however that ultimately it is God who wages war against Jerusalem, using the Roman military as his instrument.⁴⁰ Τὰ πρὸς εἰρήνην (v. 42), an idiom that occurs only in the parable of the king going to war, strengthens the image of God as warrior, moreover as aggressor.

³⁶ KLEIN, *Lukas*, 617.

³⁷ KLEIN, *Lukas*, 618.

³⁸ KLEIN, *Lukas*, 618. On the destruction of Jerusalem as consequence of Israel's failure to recognise the time of God's visitation in Jesus and the biblical background of the imagery of destruction, also WOLTER, *Luke II*, 373-374; FUSCO, "Point of View", 1689 (noting the harshness of the punishment). An equally harsh image is found in the parable of the wicked tenants (Luke 20,9-19). Like in Mark and Matthew, the tenants are slayed because of their misconduct and the killing of the owner's son (20,16).

³⁹ FUSCO, "Point of View", 1689 (noting the harsh realism of the punishment).

⁴⁰ DERRETT, 'Nisi Dominus', 256.

At first sight, this interpretation of the destruction of Jerusalem, as deserved punishment, may offer a theological explanation to the tragic end on the war of Rome against the Jews, but in fact it raises more problems than it solves. It is very problematic to offer a theological explanation to a historical tragedy like the devastation of Jerusalem, – of the whole Israel, in fact, from Gabara to Masada,⁴¹ – in a war of aggression, in which the Roman Empire forced into submission and punished a people for the single fault of fighting for its freedom. Moreover, as much as it would reflect the terrible events that took place during the devastation of Jerusalem, the account attributes to God bewildering acts of cruelty. After we have read of Jesus, the returning king, slaying his enemies, here we see God as waging war against his people, innocent civilians, children, women, and elderly included.

3. Does Luke have a message on war and peace for today?

A salient feature of Klein's interpretation is his acumen and realism. While his exegesis shows an obvious interest in theological aspects, Klein does not allow theological presuppositions to influence his judgment of the text. This is particularly the case in his interpretation of the parable of the two kings. However, as the topic addressed here is discussed in a commentary, a genre that limits the interpreter's possibility to engage in a deeper manner with the problems certain texts raise, some issues remain untouched or are only briefly mentioned. Therefore, the issues I raise do not point to shortcomings of Hans Klein's exegesis but are meant as a friendly dialogue.

From where I stand, Luke has no specific insights on the issue of war and peace-making. He touches on the topic incidentally. The parable of the king (not going to war) is part of an exhortation to the followers of Jesus, meant to illustrate a call to disciples, which in its largest part demands them to abandon everything for Jesus. In the context, the twin parables make little sense as an illustration, as they advise for careful consideration. Jülicher has perceived the tension between parables and context aptly, when he rephrased the parable of the king going to war to show how it could have sounded if it would have been consistent with the exhortation on discipleship:

“Und welcher König, der seine Unabhängigkeit gegen einen fremden Eroberer zu verteidigen hat, wird nicht Gut und Leben daran setzen, um den Feind, trotz seiner Überlegenheit zu schlagen? [...] Wie [...] einen blutigen Krieg der König, der nicht die größten Opfer bringt, nicht wagen kann, so kann jeder von Euch, der nicht auf all das Seine verzichtet, mein Jünger nicht sein”.⁴²

⁴¹ Jos., *Bell.* 3.7.1 (132-134); 7.8-9.

⁴² JÜLICHER, *Gleichnisreden* II, 209.

Taken in itself, the simile of the king omits several important issues related to war and surrender. To regard it as meaningful in situations when readers are confronted with actual wars, one would expect it to distinguish between wars of aggression and defensive wars, to consider factors that may lead to victory beyond the size of the army (strategy, objective circumstances, courage, faith and trust in divine assistance), as well as to touch on the consequences of an unjust peace. As it addresses none of these issues, the parable has no tangible teaching on the topic of war or peace-making.

On the other hand, even when allegorically, or in the form of a *vaticinium ex eventu*, ch. 19 envisages a real war, a tragic experience for large numbers of Jews (and Jewish Christ-believers) in the first century. Its dreadful outcome, culminating in the devastation of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple, is interpreted theologically, as punishment for the Jews, who have failed to recognise and welcome Jesus as the Messiah. The punishment is cruel and is not meant to arouse empathy for the victims. A historical tragedy with political causes, ultimately rooted in Roman expansionism, is blamed on those who fought for their freedom, on alleged theological grounds. God and Christ become agents of this repression and destruction. The view has shaped Christian theology for many centuries and has led to dreadful consequences for the Jews.

All these considered, it seems to me that in dramatic times, like those in which we live, when the identity and survival of nations are endangered anew by aggressor states, it has become critical to reflect on biblical passages touching on war and peace. Perhaps, Hans Klein will pick up the topic in the near future.

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