New Testament and modern parables: their relationship and literary character a reader's response

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NEW TESTAMENT AND MODERN PARABLES:

THEIR RELATIONSHIP AND LITERARY CHARACTER

A READER'S RESPONSE

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A Thesis Submitted to
the Centre for the Study of
Literature and Theology
in the Department of Theology
and the Faculty of Arts

For the Degree of
Master of Arts

University of Durham
1990

THESIS ABSTRACT

Theodore Allan Harman: New Testament and Modern Parables; their Relationship and Literary Character. A Reader's Response M.A. Thesis, University of Durham. 1990

Intellectual integrity is the coming together of understanding derived from experience and critical skills available through scholarship.

The parable evokes reflection in order to stimulate self-assessment and effect the saving experience of a radical change.

Jewish scholars have found ways to mine the rich diversity of meaning in their scriptures; for interpretation allegorizing was one method used. This was later taken over by Christian theologians to interpret parables.

In modern times literary criticism has attempted to divine an author's intended meaning. But more recently critics have questioned whether those intentions can be known with any certainty.

To appropriate a parable the reader needs to integrate in his thinking the elements of which it is composed. Furthermore in the Gospels the saving works of Jesus and the parables interpret each other. Thus the parable needs to be considered in relation to the body of the writings of which it is a part.

By the mental associations evoked by a parable, by the questions put to it, and by a required paradigm shift there can be a stimulus to new perceptions. It is not only the intellect but also the intuitions of the heart that enable perception.

Two modern exponents of the parable are Kafka and Borges. According to Kafka, the reader is the problematic element in the appropriation of a parable. Essential to Borges's thought is the multiplicity of meanings in a literary text.

For a life-enhancing encounter with the parable, the "artist-child" and the critic in the reader need to work in a harmonious balance.

CONTENTS

The material contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree in the University of Durham or any other university.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This enterprise began with meeting Professor Theodore Dorsch, a distinguished Shakespearean scholar, formerly working in Durham University. After a subsequent telephone conversation with him and his promise of a letter to Professor J. R. Watson, now in the Department of English at the University of Durham, I was introduced by Professor Watson to The Revd Dr David Jasper, Director of the Centre for the Study of Literature and Theology. Dr Jasper kindly agreed to act as my supervisor.

Since my own time as an undergraduate there has been a feeling of gratitude mingled with the thought of unfinished business. I was to have the opportunity to pursue a growing personal interest in the short story and the parable. For me they had become a particularly important way of communicating.

Dr Jasper spared no efforts to make it easy for me to initiate a course of study. His exceptional gifts as an academic supervisor have put me greatly in his debt. He has been so generous with his time, stimulating with his enthusiasm, perceptive in criticism, and supportive with encouragement. For his suggestions about areas to explore I am very grateful.

The seminars chaired by Dr Jasper have drawn scholars from places as far apart as North America, Australia,

Europe and Japan. For me these occasions have opened up questions and new pathways of thought.

Just to name a few of the persons in Durham whose scholarship and discernment has stimulated my thinking, I remember conversations with Professor Dick Watson, Mr Peter Malekin, Mr David Crane, Dr Derek Todd, Dr Kirsten Nielsen (of Aarhus University, Denmark), Mr Kiyoshi Tsuchiya (from Japan) and Dr Joseph Kurismmootil (on study leave from India).

I am also indebted to some individuals who have suggested particular material to consider or lines of thought to follow. Dr Isabel Wollaston, of Newcastle University, provided me with some quotations from the writings of Elie Wiesel. Mr Alister Cox, Headmaster of The Royal Grammar School, Newcastle, lent me a book by his brother, Murray Cox, who is the joint author with Alice Theilgaard of a book entitled, Mutative Metaphors in Psychotherapy. It is a fascinating study of the effects of metaphor in developing and changing thought. The Reverend Roger Wild of Ripon reminded me of the work that has been done on the art of Active Imagination, notably by C.G.Jung. To my friend, The Reverend Professor Arthur Curtis, formerly Professor of New Testament Literature and Theology at The Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham, with whom I have had so many fruitful conversations and from whom I have had so much support, I am indebted for his drawing

my attention to an article by a former colleague of his, The Reverend Professor A.S.Herbert, on "The Parable in the Old Testament". Professor Curtis has written for me some thoughts of his on the fourth chapter of The Gospel According to Mark. I must also mention my gratitude to Dr Josefina de Vasconcellos, among many talents a distinguished sculptress, whose artistic perception has reminded me that the roots of thought can be in the feelings and imagination. The people to whom I am indebted are too numerous to list. And since a thesis is a celebration of many good things from many sources, it is bound to be the integration of insights from a host of conversations.

I must also express my debt to the scholars, some of whom are mentioned in the Bibliography, who have been pioneering the continuing interest in parables.

To Hatfield College in the University of Durham, which has provided me with a home during my study, I am grateful. The college awarded me the Harris Scholarship and made me a beneficiary from the Joyce of Exmoor Fellowship. The founder of this fellowship, The Revd Walter W. Joyce was himself a collector of tales, notably in a book entitled Moorside Tales and Talk. The generous support of the college has contributed much to my well-being and study. Saint Chad's college has kindly given me financial support for my employment as Assistant Librarian

in the Research Library for The Centre for the Study of Literature and Theology. The All Saints Educational Foundation helpfully gave me an award to assist me financially.

For many enjoyable hours I am grateful to my companions in conversation. In various ways they have contributed much to what I have written.

PREFACE

Jesus "began to teach them many things in parables...With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables."(Mark 4.2,33-34)

"The Master gave his teaching in parables and stories which his disciples listened to with pleasure - and occasional frustration, for they longed for something deeper.

The Master was unmoved. To all their objections he would say, 'You have yet to understand...that the shortest distance between a human being and Truth is a story.'" (Anthony de Mello, "Myths", One Minute Wisdom [Anand, India: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1985] p.23)

Chapter 1.

INTELLECTUAL INTEGRITY

1.1 A Context to Promote Understanding

To those who are used to reading a text without any preamble, it must seem strange to see a book entitled, How to Read the Bible. Does this imply that it is not enough to be able to read? If so, what is such a book aiming to achieve? Some would say that since the Bible is the product of the Jewish and Christian communities it can only be properly understood in the context of their particular traditions. For example, a Hindu unfamiliar with Judaism and Christianity would interpret the Bible in terms with which he was familiar. His understanding would in no way compensate for an experience of living in a Jewish or Christian community. To supply this deficiency a book entitled, How to Read the Bible, would supply the novice with information about the tradition to which the Bible belongs so that the text would be understood in its religious context.

1.2 A Personal Response in Reading

On the other hand there are those who would prefer in the first instance to make a direct approach to the text of the Bible in order that the text might make its own impact. Whatever its limitations this initial reading has a value in itself. It can be a counterweight to the interpretations given by other readers and critics. Some

would say that reading the Bible demands a personal response to its images, parables, narratives, and aphorisms. And unless there is an opportunity to discover a creative change in thinking, feeling and imagining the reading experience is merely perfunctory. The experience of the reader should illuminate the text; the text should illuminate the reader's experience. Thus to be satisfying, reading requires an integrity between the reader and the text. Since parables are of necessity literary forms that require a response between the reader and the text it will be necessary to explore some further implications of intellectual integrity.

1.3 **Freedom to Learn**

There is a distinctive quality in some people which demands an internal freedom, a freedom to be sincere and authentic within themselves. They do not easily assent to the persuasions of a group where this would frustrate a free, personal response. For such people reading becomes a personal encounter, calling on their capacities to imagine, and to test from experience and reasoning.

1.4 **The Persuasion of Orthodoxy**

In contrast, it is more important for others to be accepted by the group since the group gives them an identity. Those who are wanting to be accepted by the group may be subject to manipulation since the condition of membership is nominal conformity. It could be assumed that academics who are by profession dedicated to the uses

of reason and criticism would be unaffected by the pressures of the group. However, it must be recognized that it is a common fact of human experience that a condition of belonging to a society is assent to its doctrines. To this academic society is often no exception. As a sign of assent the academic participant in a discussion may display the badges of orthodoxy, namely the use of the appropriate technical language. It must of course be admitted that technical language is necessary as a shortcut for complex ideas, and as labels for the distinctive concepts of an academic discipline. But with the over-ready use of jargon there can be dangers to intellectual integrity. The jargon may fix thinking in prescribed channels of thought where an openness of thought might be more appropriate. As some writers have not been slow to point out the affectations of jargon may in fact disguise a lack of intellectual grasp. So if intellectual integrity is to be achieved, technical terms will require of their users a proper understanding and testing of their implications.

1.5 Orthodoxy and Truth

One could define orthodoxy as the teaching which has been established as the accepted norm. It is that which has been tested and found to represent what the collective consensus or the heroes of the society recognize as central to its way of life. As an example of consensus consider the following statement: "Now in the Catholic

Church itself we take the greatest care to hold that which has been believed everywhere, always, and by all."[1] Orthodoxy creates a body of doctrine which defines the boundaries of acceptable thought; thus it serves to create a unity within the society. Furthermore some societies vested with spiritual authority will tend to equate orthodoxy with truth. "That we may be altogether of the same mind and in conformity with the Church herself, if she shall have defined anything to be black which to our eyes appears to be white, we ought in like manner to pronounce it to be black. For we must undoubtingly believe, that the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Spirit of the Orthodox Church His Spouse, by which Spirit we are governed and directed to salvation, is the same."[2] As distinct from orthodoxy, how is truth to be defined? Here are some definitions: "Authenticity, divine reality."[3] "The unveiled reality lying at the basis of, and agreeing with, an appearance; the manifested, veritable essence of a matter."[4] Truth in these senses is a reality which is perceived. It is not governed by considerations of consensus but rather by the perception which comes from purity of heart or sincerity. "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God."(Matthew 5.8) The problem is that while a person's perception of truth or reality may be authentic and sincere nevertheless that perception may be limited or biased. For this reason orthodoxy attempts to provide norms to

eliminate eccentric opinions. While children, the mentally alienated, mystics and heretics could be authentic to their feelings and thoughts they could yet be outside orthodoxy.

1.6 **The Way of Understanding**

For those whose main concern is to find acceptance by a community their urgency is to understand and follow orthodox teaching and practice. To such people personal response to the texts of the community is of minimal significance. They are content to let the leaders of the community interpret its own texts and establish norms of orthodoxy.

But this is not enough for others. The creative encounter between a reader and a text is too important to be delegated. What experience and thought have taught must be brought to the text. Conversely they hope that the text will stimulate their thinking and living. How is this to be done? It is evident that a mind cluttered with preconceptions and prejudices will need to be cleared by a kind of self-emptying in order that it may be effectively receptive. Such is most naturally the talent of the childlike mind, the humble and the open-minded. Furthermore it will require not only the bringing of personal abilities to the text but the willingness for the text to work its effects on the reader.

One procedure that promotes an engagement with a text is the question. The question declares an ignorance,

a search for meaning and a space that needs to be filled. By its search, the question allows a freedom in learning since it is enquiring about possibilities and opening up new avenues of thought. By this freedom there is the means for a creative encounter between the reader and the text.

1.7 **Methods**

So far I have suggested that there is a tension between the capacities of the human mind to make personal responses and to be guided by the methods and orthodoxy of the community. To explore an integrity which can ride this polarity of difference is the purpose of this chapter. Thus it becomes important to evaluate some of the controlling and critical methods which have been used by the church in its interpretion of the Scriptures.

1.8 **Scripture: Its Own Interpreter**

"Luther...believed that Scripture was to be interpreted in the light of its centre, Christ...He also believed that, in the community of the Church, Scripture was its own interpreter. Such interpretation involved being grasped by the Biblical Word and the Spirit conjoined in such a way that one was laid hold of by more than what the text said. It was being grasped in one's depth, being redirected in one's total being, including heart and mind, by the living Word."[5] The Westminster Confession of the Calvinists reads: "The infallible rule of interpretation of scripture is the scripture itself;

and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any scripture (which is not manifold but one) it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly."[6]

1.9 **Doctrinal Guidelines for Interpreters**

In the Christian community it has been thought necessary that there should be doctrinal bases which form criteria or norms by which the orthodoxy of interpretation is assessed. The teachings of the early Fathers of the Church, the deliberations of the early Councils of the Church, the Creeds, the thirty nine Articles of Religion, and The Westminster Confession are examples of doctrinal statements which provide criteria for interpretation. The role of the interpreter of Scripture becomes one of comparing interpretations with the formulae of orthodoxy. Personal response to the writings of the Scriptures becomes principally that of trying to conform in one's understanding to what has been the collective orthodoxy of a particular tradition. It becomes urgent to ease one's understanding into what orthodoxy has formulated; this is the condition of acceptance by the religious community. The disciple is therefore one who is required to be a spokesman of the teachings contained within the acceptable boundaries of orthodoxy.

1.10 **Critical Approaches**

Differently the critical approaches to the Bible have created techniques with which to illuminate the meaning.

Textual Criticism endeavours to answer the question, "What is the original text?" Philological Study answers the question, "What is the 'language of the text'?" Literary Criticism studies the style, structure, and grammatical aspects of the text. It also answers the question, "What is the literary genre of the text?" Form Criticism and History of Traditions attempt to answer the question, "What are the origins and history of the traditions used in the text?" Redaction Criticism endeavours to understand who the author was, his theology and the circumstances of his writing.[7] "The branch of study which seeks to identify earlier traditions in a writer's text is usually known as Source Criticism."[8] As an example, Source Criticism attempts to deal with the problematic understanding of Mark 4.10-12. "'When he was alone, the Twelve and others who were round him questioned him about the parables. He replied, 'To you the secret of the kingdom of God has been given; but to those who are outside everything comes by way of parables, so that (as Scripture says) they may look and look, but see nothing; they may hear and hear, but understand nothing; otherwise they might turn to God and be forgiven.'[9] The earliest commentator on the text - assuming that St Mark's Gospel is given chronological priority - is St Matthew, who apparently attempted to overcome the problem of Jesus' deliberate mystification of the people by replacing '<u>so that</u>'(ἵνα) with '<u>for</u>' (ὅτι)(Matthew 13.13). Matthew's

revision is clearly an attempt to draw the sting out of a difficult text...Perhaps its scandal and its enigmatic quality is quite deliberate, posing a riddle which yields no simple interpretation and requires an exercise of the imagination...Perhaps the scandal and the enigma is at the heart of the gospel...The text may be, by nature, jealous of the precious treasure that it guards."[10]

Sociological Criticism proposes "the possibility that social, rather than ideological factors, were determinative in some articulations of the early Christian's self-understanding."[11] "Theological language and the claims made therein can no longer be explained without taking into account socio-economic-cultural factors as essential ingredients in the production of that language."[12]

Ferdinand de Saussure contends "that meaning in language is not inherent in words themselves. Words are simply signs and their meaning depends on an underlying system of conventions and relationships. Saussure thus distinguished between what he called <u>langue</u> as the underlying system, and <u>parole</u> as the individual instances where the language is used in actual speech...The whole set of rules of the game of chess corresponds to the <u>langue</u> of a language. Individual moves of specific pieces in a game correspond to the <u>parole</u>. Furthermore, in the middle of a game of chess, all that matters is the current position of the pieces on the board. How that position

has been reached, its 'etymology', is immaterial. All that matters is the situation at the present and the rules that govern the game."[13]

Canonical Criticism is the work of B.S.Childs and his supporters. It asks the question: Does the fact that certain books have been selected to be included in the collection or canon of Scripture affect their interpretation? It is said "that the canon provides not only a text but also a con-text within which the individual texts should be interpreted. This context is not necessarily that of the original author, and hence a rather different interpretation may arise; but this context of the canon should be taken seriously by all those who take the canon seriously...Psalm 8: 'What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him?'(Revised Standard Version, 1971)...The psalmist may have the creation story of Genesis 1 in mind...A canonical perspective can note that the same words are adopted by the writer of Hebrews and applied to Jesus."[14]

Christopher Tuckett concludes his discussion with comments on some trends in Literary Criticism. "Many...critics would argue that a literary text can have multiple meanings, and that concentration on the author's original meaning is an unjustified limitation to the critical task of understanding the text."[15] "Parables can have different meanings simply because they are placed in

different contexts...To return to the parable of The Sheep and the Goats, the story may mean one thing in Matthew's Gospel where the prime concern is for the persecuted Christian missionaries; in a contemporary situation of a sermon during Christian Aid Week, the parable might signify something rather different."[16] "One extreme view would argue that the only acceptable meaning of a parable is its 'original' meaning; the other would argue that a parable is a piece of 'literature' whose meaning is potentially completely open-ended. But the first view ignores the plain fact that people have found different meanings in the parables, some of which it would be hard to categorize as 'wrong'. The second view gives carte blanche to the interpreter and ignores the author's intention of the parables."[17]

Solely to follow the pathways of some critical methods in the interpretation of texts is to be aware of both their value and their limitations. Like language they provide a means of thought. And like a woodcarver's chisels and hammer they enable the reader to carve out meanings from the raw material of a literary text. Unfortunately, however, criticism can become a kind of culture in itself, the study of books about books about books, the refinement of one critical approach after another. Scholarship justifies itself by criticizing old theories and creating new ones. It is as if the woodcarver spent most of his time sharpening and adding to

his collection of gouges without creating a notable work of art. The theories of criticism cannot be a substitute for imagination and intuition through which perception is created. As I hope to discuss later in this essay there is evidence that there are two essentially different faculties of the brain, conceptual and imaginative.[18]

Criticism can sometimes overshoot its role as a means to the elucidation of a text. For example, the urgency to find supporting evidence for a critical theory has made some scholars handle the Biblical texts in a precipitate manner. Where the theory does not readily apply they endeavour to discover whether or not the text is original, that is whether or not it has been modified by some copyist or editor. Jülicher deduced that parables are not allegorical and that there is only one point of meaning for each parable.[19] The allegorizing of some of the parables in the gospels, for example, The Parable of the Sower(Mark 4.14-20), was, he suggests, the work of evangelists influenced by current trends and needs in New Testament times, but not likely to be the telling of Jesus.[20]

Consider another example. With reference to the purpose of parables a passage in Saint Mark's gospel reads, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything comes in parables; in order that 'they may indeed look but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand; so that they may

not turn again and be forgiven.'" (Mark 4.11-12) This would imply that Jesus told parables to darken the minds of his hearers. The immense learning of T.W.Manson proposes that the Aramaic originals behind the Greek could admit of another more acceptable meaning. "All things come in parables to those outside who see indeed but do not know and hear indeed but do not understand lest they should repent and receive forgiveness."[21] Manson may in fact be rejecting the received text because it does not match his expectations. But it seems that there is a similar thought in John's gospel about lack of perception. "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind."(John 9.39). Professor Arthur Curtis comments, in an unpublished piece of writing, on the meaning of Mark 4.11-12. He accepts the text as it stands. He paraphrases it. "The mystery of the Divine Rule has been given to you - the Promised Final Rule of God! But to those outside (gone away) all these things simply occur in parables, so that (all under the Divine Dispensation) seeing they may see and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not comprehend, lest haply they may turn and be forgiven." Commenting on Mark's quotation from Isaiah 6.9-10, "so that seeing they may see and not perceive...", Professor Curtis proposes that "the interpretation depends upon the tone of voice of the prophet. We may safely assume that as a genuine prophet he is not uttering

correct theology, but totally absorbed in bearing and expressing the burden of Yahweh. For Yahweh has to offer freewill, the freedom to rebel, yet agonizes in the attempt to persuade Israel of an about-turn. The tone of voice is therefore that of bitter yearning. ἵνα (so that) implies that it has to be within the Divine Covenant-relationship that freedom to rebel is given, but we are to reckon with the depth of the pain of God." We cannot escape the fact that every scholar brings his own frame of reference and experience to his research. It could be that the words about perception in Mark 4.11-12 are not being addressed to the learned and logical mind. It is more likely that the words are intended for those who have begun to grapple with the paradoxical nature of parables where logical criteria are subverted and insight comes outside expectations.

1.11 **Some Conclusions**

Relying heavily on the traditions of research and critical acumen, scholars take on board very readily the theories and technical terms of those working in their own field. It must be admitted that both the checks of doctrinal norms and the techniques of criticism can be supportive in the work of interpretation. At the same time, however, they can become ways in which the reader, not trained in these disciplines, is made to feel a stranger to his own intelligence. His personal response to a text becomes irrelevant. The work has been done by

experts.

So what is there that we can bring to a text, apart from doctrinal learning and critical methods? Firstly, it is apparent that we can learn from experience; this learning we can bring to our study of a text. "There is a constant interplay, an ongoing interchange, between everyday affairs and the word of God in the Torah - Scripture. What we see reminds us of what Scripture says - and what scripture says informs our understanding of the things we see and do in everyday life."[22] Secondly, we can bring the faculty of the imagination. Coleridge writes: "The imagination then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinte I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will...It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate...It struggles to idealize and to unify."[23] From this one could deduce that the imagination is essential for the creative work of perception in reading a text.

1.12 **Intellectual Integrity**

What then is intellectual integrity? I believe it is an integration of critical skills, understanding derived from life's experiences, and the work of the imagination. This integrity is what allows a person to speak with

authority. "Jesus... taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes (scholars)." (Matthew 7.29) With reference to parables I hope to explore in this thesis those elements of which our intellectual integrity is composed.

Notes

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2. Henry Bettenson, "Ignatius Loyola: Spiritual Exercises" Documents of the Christian Church (Oxford: O.U.P., 1963) p.366.

3. Kittel and Friedrich, "alētheia", Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged by Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1985) p.39.

4. Hermann Cremer, "Ἀλήθεια", Biblico-Theological Lexicon of the New Testament (Edinburgh: T & T. Clark, 1878) p.86.

5. Martin Luther: Selections From His Writings, Edited and with an introduction by John Dillenberger (New York: Doubleday, 1962) pp.xxx-xxxi.

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8. Christopher Tuckett, Reading the New Testament (London: S.P.C.K., 1987) p.78.

9. The New English Bible. (Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press, 1970).

10. David Jasper, The New Testament and the Literary Imagination (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987) pp.29-30.

11. Tuckett, op.cit., p.137.

12. R. Scroggs, "The Sociological Interpretation of the New Testament" New Testament Society (26), 1980. pp.175-176.

13. Tuckett, op.cit. p.153.

14. Tuckett, ibid. pp.168-9.

15. Tuckett, ibid. pp.174-175.

16. Tuckett, ibid. p. 178.

17. Tuckett, ibid. pp.179-180.

18. See Chapter 7. The Good Samaritan: A Study in Dialogue, 7.3, p.62.

19. Joachim Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus (London: S.C.M., 1972) pp.18-20.

20. Jülicher, The History of the Interpretation of the Parables of Jesus, I (Die Gleichnisreden Jesu) (Tübingen, 1899[=1910]) pp.203-322.

21. T.W.Manson, The Teaching of Jesus (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1939) pp.75-80.

22. Jacob Neusner, What is Midrash? (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987) p.103.

23. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria(1817) (London: Dent, 1977) p.167.

Chapter 2

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF PARABLE

2.1 Parable - English

The English word parable is described in The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary as "a comparison, a similitude; any saying or narration in which something is expressed in terms of something else; an allegory, an apologue. Also any kind of enigmatical dark saying. A fictitious narrative (usually of something that might naturally occur), by which moral or spiritual relations are typically set forth, as the parables of the New Testament."[1]

2.2 Parable - Greek

The English word parable translates the Greek word παραβολή. Παραβολή is derived from παραβάλλω (παρά = beside, and, βάλλω = throw, cast, put, place) Thus παραβολή means "a placing beside, juxtaposition, comparison, illustration, analogy, figure."[2]

2.3 Parable - Old Testament

It has a variety of uses in the Greek, Septuagint version (LXX) of the Old Testament. There it commonly translates the Hebrew word "mashal". Mashal itself has a variety of meanings. "The Hebrew mashal has the sense of 'general proposition'...as in 'the proverb(παραβολή, LXX) of the ancients, Out of the wicked cometh forth wickedness.'I Samuel 24.13"[3] It is here that mashal in

the Hebrew of the Massoretic Text is translated "proverb". The Greek Septuagint at the same place translates mashal with παραβολή. The parable (mashal/παραβολή) "sometimes indicates an example set up for edification or warning. Jeremiah 24.9(LXX): "I will cause them to be dispersed into all the kingdoms of the earth, and they shall be for a reproach, and a proverb(παραβολή/mashal), and an object of hatred, and a curse, in every place whither I have driven them out."[4] "When it means an utterance of deeper meaning than appears on the surface, it is sometimes joined with πρόβλημά(riddle),αἴνιγμα (wonder), διήγημα (byword), or σκοτεινός λόγος (dark speech)[5]

(a) Psalm 48(49).4(LXX): "I will incline mine ear to a parable: I will open my riddle on the harp."[4]

(b) Deuteronomy 28.37(LXX): "Thou shalt be there for a wonder, and a parable, and a tale, among all the nations, to which the Lord thy God shall carry thee away."[4]

(c) 2 Chronicles 7.20(LXX): "This house which I have consecrated to my name I will remove out of my sight, and I will make it a proverb(παραβολή) and a byword."[4]

(d) Proverbs 1.6(LXX): "A wise man...will understand a parable and a dark speech; the sayings of the wise also, and riddles(αἰνίγματα)."[4]

In the two quotations above, from Deuteronomy and 2 Chronicles, there is the idea of the parable being an object lesson. "Thou shalt be there for a wonder, and a

parable, and a tale, among all the nations." "This house...I will make it a proverb(parable) and a byword."

2.4 The Purpose of the Parable(Mashal)

(a) Judgment

There is an article by Professor A. S. Herbert entitled "The Parable(Mashal) in the Old Testament."[6] By a survey of passages in the Old Testament, he endeavours to discover the purpose of the mashal. 1 Samuel 10.11-12(LXX): "All that had known him before came, and saw, and, behold, he was in the midst of the prophets: and the people said everyone to his neighbour, What is this that has happened to the son of Kis? Is Saul also among the prophets? And one of them answered and said, And who is his father? and therefore it became a proverb(παροιμία/mashal), Is Saul also among the prophets?"[4] Herbert comments on this.

> Is Saul also among the prophets!(where the appropriate English punctuation at the end of the saying would clearly be an exclamation mark rather than a question mark)...Saul is "out of place", a king has no business prophesying ...Clearly the saying reported in 1 Samuel 10.12...is not just an example of popular wisdom. It is a scornful phrase. It would be used of someone who was behaving in a manner not proper to his reputation or honour. He would, by this saying, be made to see that his behaviour was similar to that of Saul's, would recognise the judgment of his fellows upon him and, it might be supposed, would accept that judgment upon himself.[7]

The mashal(parable) is "the description of a representative case or object lesson, often focussed in the experience of an individual and implemented by one or

more comparisons from which those addressed are expected to make an analogy that will effect some reassessment in their thinking and conduct."[6] Another example of a parable or proverb of judgment is from 1 Samuel 24.12-16,18(LXX). It is in a conversation between David and King Saul.

> "I have not sinned against thee, yet thou layest snares for my soul to take it. The Lord judge between me and thee, and the Lord requite thee on thyself: but my hand shall not be upon thee. As the old proverb(παραβολή) says, Transgression will proceed from the wicked ones: but my hand shall not be upon thee. And now after whom dost thou come forth, O king of Israel? After whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, and after a flea? The Lord be judge and umpire between me and thee, the Lord look upon and judge my cause, and rescue me out of thy hand...And Saul said to David, Thou art more righteous than I, for thou hast recompensed me good, and I have recompensed thee evil."[4]

Herbert comments:

> The verse containing the mashal (παραβολή) ("Transgression will proceed from the wicked ones") is rejected by most commentators...on the grounds that "it intimates that the wickedness of Saul would be his own destruction", and so contrasts with what is otherwise shown by David in this incident - deep respect for the Lord's anointed and a fine magnanimity...The judgment implied against Saul in this story, is not against his moral character - however much that might be a proper inference - but in the fact that as between these two, Saul and David, Saul is in the wrong and David is in the right and so verse 18 ("And Saul said to David, 'Thou art more righteous than I'".)...David is content to leave Yahweh to set him in the right as against Saul, though he might well have been justified in vindicating himself. There seems...no very good reason for deleting the verse(containing the mashal or parable: "Transgression...&c);it is of a piece with what precedes...David stops short of explicitly condemning...What he does is to bring everything to a point and direct that point to Saul with the word : "Transgression

> will proceed from the wicked ones"(LXX) It is left for Saul...to accept the inescapable conviction. The saying by itself is trite - as most proverbs are. As applied to a particular situation it is a most vigorous and brilliant use of a well-known saying, and it takes its place with Biblical parables. It involves a judgment.[8]

David describes the situation between them and proposes a proverb or parable which may, if Saul discerns it, allow him to identify his condition. "If the cap fits, wear it." Saul admits that David is more righteous.

(b) Reversal of Fortune

Concerning another purpose of the parable, Herbert writes about "the group of passages listed in A Hebrew and English Lexicon[9] as 'prophetic figurative discourse'...The use of mashal in these passages" is accompanied "by the use of the verb nasa' - lift up, take up, or more probably 'solemnly utter'...The term(parable)is used consistently as a description of Balaam's utterances, Numbers 23.7,18; 24.3,15,20,21,23; LXX.[10] For example,"He took up his parable and said..."(Numbers 23.7 LXX). "The phrase occurs also in Micah 2.4; Habakkuk 2.6; Isaiah 14.4." To show this particular use of the word parable in its context here is a passage from Habakkuk 2.2-8(LXX):

> "The Lord answered me and said, Write the vision, and that plainly on a tablet, that he that reads it may run. For the vision is yet for a time, and it shall shoot forth at the end, and not in vain: though he(the vision) should tarry, wait for him; for he will surely come, and will not tarry. If he(or any man) should draw back, my soul has no pleasure in him; but the just shall live by my faith(or faith in me). But the arrogant man and the scorner, the boastful man shall not finish anything; who has

> enlarged his desire as the grave, and like death he is never satisfied, and he will gather to himself all the nations, and will receive to himself all the peoples. Shall not all these take up a parable (mashal/παραβολή) against him? and a proverb(προβλημα) to tell against him? and they shall say woe to him that multiplies to himself the possessions which are not his...For suddenly there shall rise up those that bite him, and they that plot against thee shall awake, and thou shalt be a plunder to them. Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the nations that are left shall spoil thee."[4]

The question could read as follows: "Shall not all the oppressed nations take up a parable to tell against the arrogant man?" Herbert comments on these passages:

> That they are oracles is obvious enough...A comparison of these passages discloses certain features in common. In each case we have a violent reversal of fortune described. It is described in such terms that it is shown to be the direct opposite of what men were expecting or felt they had a right to expect. A human assessment of the situation must be replaced by the divine assessment. Thus Balak(Numbers 23 - 24) had every right to expect his prophet Balaam to curse Israel and bless the army of Moab. In fact, Israel is blessed and Moab cursed. All the words of blessing and cursing are what Balak wanted, but they are applied to the wrong people. Further, when Balaam turns to Amalek and Kain, the same feature is apparent, the more obviously perhaps because of the brevity of the mashal.
>
> Numbers 24.20: "the first of the nations is
> Amalek,
> But his ending shall be destruction."
>
> and so in verse 21:
> "Enduring and unassailable is Kain.
> But destruction and captivity await
> him."[11]

The reversal of fortune is similar in Habakkuk. "Woe to him that multiplies to himself the possessions which are not his!...For suddenly there shall arise up those that bite him, and they that plot against thee shall

awake, and thou shalt be a plunder to them. Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the nations that are left shall spoil thee."

In the conclusion to his article Herbert writes about the purpose of the parable or mashal.

> It has a clearly recognisable purpose: that of quickening an apprehension of the real as distinct from the wished for, or complacently accepted; of compelling the hearer or reader to form a judgment on himself, his situation or his conduct. It is a recognised and accepted rhetorical or literary genre, as witness the use of a mashal by the contemporaries of Ezekiel. But as used by the prophets it is especially intended to awaken men to the supreme reality of God's present judgment with the intent that they may be saved. This usage persists in 4 Ezra (2 Esdras) and Enoch, and comes to its finest expression in the Parables of Jesus.[12]

2.5 **Summary**

The parable can be an object lesson from a person or situation. Since it is sometimes associated with such words as proverb,riddle or dark speech, it is that on which the reader or hearer is expected to reflect. Its purpose is to stimulate self-judgment. By its reversal of human expectations the parable can show God's unmerited grace effective in human affairs. The reversal of expectations also prompts a radical change of perspective.

2.6 **A New Testament Example of Mashal**

In the New Testament parable of the The Prodigal Son(Luke 15.11-32) there are some of the elements of mashal described above. Notice the younger son's reversal of fortune. "I perish here with hunger."(Luke 15.17) But

the father responds to his homecoming with the words, "Bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry."(Luke 15.23) The younger son exercises a judgement upon himself. "I am no longer worthy to be called your son." (Luke 15.21) For the elder son there is a reversal of expectation. "These many years have I served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends."(Luke 15.29)

Notes

1. William Little, H.W.Fowler and Jessie Coulson, The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, Revised and Edited by C.T.Onions, Third Edition Completely Reset with Etymologies Revised by G.W.S.Friedrichsen, Volume II, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) p.1507.

2. G. Abbott-Smith, A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament, (Edinburgh: T.& T. Clark, 1937) pp.74, 336, 338.

3. James Hastings, "Parable (New Testament)", Dictionary of the Bible, Volume 3, (Edinburgh: T.and T.Clark, 1900) p.661.

4. The English translation is from The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament and Apocrypha, (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons).

5. Hastings, op.cit., p.662.

6. A.S.Herbert, "The 'Parable' (Mashal) in the Old Testament", Scottish Journal of Theology, volume 7, no 2, June 1954, pp.182-183.

7. Gammie, Brueggemann, Lee Humphreys, Ward, (Editors),Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honour of Samuel Terrien, (New York: Union Theological Seminary, 1978) p.145.

8. Herbert, op. cit., pp.183-184.

9. Brown, Driver and Briggs: A Hebrew and English Lexicon (Oxford: O.U.P., 1952) p.605.

10. Herbert, op.cit., pp.188-189.

11. Herbert, ibid., p.189.

12. Herbert, ibid., p.196.

Chapter 3

THE FUNCTION OF PARABLES

3.1 Improvisation

"With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it?"(Mark 4.30) The question implies that a parable has not been previously contrived; it is an improvisation. The historical moment calls out the parable, such that it becomes a "revelation", even to him who composes it. One possible implication of Mark 4.30 is that the kingdom of God can only be understood by something with which it can be compared. The words of the parable make it known. "I will open my mouth to speak in parables, I will proclaim what has been hidden from the foundation of the world"(Matthew 13.35) That which has been hidden is the mystery of the kingdom of God.(See Mark 4.11) Therefore the parable does not explain the kingdom; it is the means by which the kingdom is made known to those who have "eyes to see". For those who are ready "to see", the parables activate the kingdom; it is as if the parables create the kingdom among or within the hearts of mankind.

> The parables are cause and not effect of Jesus' other words and deeds. They are not what Joachim Jeremias called "weapons of warfare"; they are the cause of the war and the manifesto of its inception. As against Jülicher, the parables are not timeless moral truths beyond all and above all historical situations; but, as against Jeremias, neither are they to be located in Jesus' own historical experience as visual aids to defend a proclamation delivered

> before them and without them. Jesus' parables are radically constitutive of his own distinctive historicity and all else is located in them. Parable is the house of God.[1]

What does Crossan mean by "Jesus' parables are radically constitutive of his own distinctive historicity"? They are redolent of the impact of Jesus upon history. And since "all else is located in them" they are the words and images of which the acts of Jesus are the counterpart. Furthermore the parable can be the means through which we can meet the God who is in Christ.

3.2 **Parable Time**

Crossan proposes that the challenge of Jesus is that time should not be thought of as extending into the future. It is rather that God comes to create one's time. "The one who plans, projects, and programmes a future...is in idolatry against the sovereign freedom of God's advent to create one's time and establish one's historicity. This is the central challenge of Jesus...It is the view of time as man's future that Jesus opposed in the name of time as God's present, not as eternity beyond us but as advent within us."[2] When Crossan writes about "idolatry against the sovereign freedom of God's advent" is he suggesting that man has created a time of his own, that he lives in his own time? According to Jesus mankind has to learn to live in God; this can only be done in the present moment. Thus the parable requires a response such that God can come to the one who appropriates the parable.

For this reason Crossan writes that "Parable is the House of God".

It would seem that Jesus, on the basis of this kind of thinking, is not so much concerned with the imparting of the wisdom of experience, but rather he is hoping to introduce His hearers to the "time" or "kingdom of God" which "has come near."(Mark 1.15) "It is one thing to communicate to others conclusions and admonitions based on one's own profound spiritual experience. It was this that Pharisaic theology did so admirably at the time of Jesus. It is quite another thing to try and communicate that experience itself, or, better, to assist people to find their own ultimate encounter. This is what Jesus' parables seek to do: to help others into their own experience of the Kingdom and to draw from that experience their own way of life."[3]

3.3 **Parables of Reversal**

How can parables help a person to experience the kingdom of God? Crossan says that what he calls "parables of reversal" can create a profound uncertainty.

> If the last becomes first, we have the story of Joseph. If the first becomes last, we have the story of Job. But if the last becomes first and the first becomes last we have a polar reversal...When the north pole becomes the south pole, and the south the north, a world is reversed and overturned and we find ourselves standing firm on utter uncertainty. The parables of reversal intend to do precisely this to our security because such is the advent of the Kingdom.[4]

The story of the Prodigal Son(Luke 15.11-32)

exemplifies this idea of polar reversal. "Can you imagine, asks Jesus, a vagabond and wastrel son being fêted by his father and a dutiful and obedient son left outside in the cold?"[5] The parable of the Prodigal Son induces the reader to make a range of responses. "The younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country."(v.13) The reader may identify with the younger son in his or her own desire for independence from parents. "There he squandered his property in dissolute living."(v.13) We can identify with this possibility either as an experience in our own lives or know it to be what we have imagined but never dared to fulfil. The story continues: "He came to himself."(v.17) The younger son has now to face the reality of his condition. "I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands."(v.19) The Prodigal Son hopes to win favour by this supplication. But it is the father who takes an initiative. "While he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him."(v.20) The son is not to win his reinstatement by a plea. He is received by an act of grace that could not have been anticipated.

The predicament of the older brother evokes sympathy. "For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours

came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!"(v.29-30) One can sympathize with the elder brother. But the father makes no apology, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours."(v.31) The elder son is living within his father's providence. However, his self-pity makes him jealous. In the end neither the younger son nor the elder brother can earn their expectations. The younger son is the undeserving recipient of the father's initiative of grace. The elder brother is hungry for more favour. Their expectations are unfulfilled. They have to learn that the father is gracious, but not according to their own particular hopes.

3.4 **Imaginative Time in Parables**

As the reader of this parable I am allowed the opportunity to enter an imaginative time. The parable becomes a space into which the free response of my thought can flow. However, the story challenges moral assumptions in order to show the workings of grace. As Dominic Crossan says, parables "are meant to change not reassure us."[6] They "are stories which shatter the deep structure of our accepted world...They remove our defences and make us vulnerable to God." [7]

Notes

1. John Dominic Crossan, In Parables (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985) pp.32-33

2. Crossan, ibid., p.35.

3. Crossan, ibid., p.52.

4. Crossan, ibid., p.55.

5. Crossan, ibid., p.74.

6. John Dominic Crossan, The Dark Interval: Towards a Theology of Story (Harlow, Essex: Argus Communications, 1975) p.56.

7. Crossan, ibid., p.122.

Chapter 4

JEWISH INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE

4.1 The Beginnings of Biblical Interpretation

The interpretation of Scripture is reported in the Bible itself.

> They told the Scribe Ezra to bring the book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had given to Israel...Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Masseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, helped the people to understand the law, while the people remained in their places. So they read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.(Nehemiah 8.1,7-8)

Concerning the same episode, the Septuagint reads: "Esdras taught and instructed them distinctly in the knowledge of the Lord, and the people understood the law in the reading."(Nehemiah 8.8)(Baxter English Translation). From beginnings like this the principles of interpretation, or hermeneutics, evolved. "The term hermeneutics was originally used to designate the interpretation of the Bible, and included both the formulation of rules governing a valid reading of the Biblical text and exegesis, or commentary on the application of the meanings expressed in the text."[1] Such interpretative attempts were known as Midrash: "A Jewish method of Scriptural exegesis directed to the discovery in the sacred text of a meaning deeper than the literal one ...It originated in the period of the Soferim('scribes'),

of whom according to Jewish tradition, Ezra was the first."[2]

According to Scripture itself God is the inspirer of interpretation. Genesis 41.15-16: "Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it; and I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.' Joseph answered Pharaoh, 'It is not in me; God will give a favourable answer.'"

4.2 **Rabbinic Exegesis**

Professor Longenecker proposes that there are four types of exegesis for the Jewish rabbis of the first century.

> (i) Literalist interpretation. For example, "In the evening all should recline when they recite (the Shema: the law given in Deuteronomy 6.4-9), but in the morning they should stand up, for it is written 'And when thou liest down and when thou risest up'"[3]
>
> (ii) Midrashic interpretation. "Midrash (designates) an exegesis which going more deeply than the mere literal sense, attempts to penetrate into the spirit of the Scriptures, to examine the text from all sides, and thereby to derive interpretations which are not immediately obvious."[4] There were attributed to Hillel, a contemporary ot Jesus, seven rules of midrashic exegesis:
> "1. What applies in a less important case will certainly apply in a more important case.
> 2. Verbal analogy from one verse to another; where the same words are applied to two separate cases it follows that the same considerations apply to both.
> 3. Building up a family from a single text; when the same phrase is found in a number of passages then a consideration found in one of them applies to all of them.
> 4. Building up a family from two texts; a

principle is established by relating two texts together; the principle can then be applied to the other passages.
5. The general and the particular; a general picture may be restricted by a particularisation of it in another verse; or conversely, a particular rule may be extended into a general principle.
6. As is found in another place; a difficulty in one text may be solved by comparing it with another which has points of general (though not necessarily verbal) similarity.
7. A meaning established by its context."[5]

An example of the first rule of the exegetical school of Hillel is that reported of Jesus' answer to the question in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 6.28-30, "Why do you worry about clothing?" In the style of a parable, he answers the rhetorical question: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you -- you of little faith?"(Matthew 6.28-30) "What applies in a less important case will certainly apply in a more important case."[10] In the course of time these rules were extended. In the time of Rabbi Ishmael, A.D. 110-130, there were thirteen principles of rabbinic exegesis.[6] "The Torah 'can be expounded in forty-nine different ways'"[8] "From the school of Rabbi Ishmael (second generation Taanim c. A.D. 90-130) we have the maxim: 'Just as the rock is split into many splinters so also may one Biblical verse convey many teachings'"[7] "Philo and

the men of Qumran indicate their agreement that there are multiple meanings in the words of Scripture."[9]

(iii) Pesher Interpretation.

The Aramaic word pesher means "solution" or "interpretation". In the Book of Daniel it is clear that the "raz", the mystery, is divinely communicated to one party, and the "pesher", the interpretation, to another. Not until the mystery and the interpretation are brought together can the divine communication be understood.[11] The mysteries, or raz, are the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar, chapters 2,4,and 7. The interpretations, or pesher, are the interpretations of Daniel. "The 'This is that' fulfilment motif, which is distinctive to pesher exegesis, repeatedly comes to the fore in the words of Jesus...In Luke 4.16-21 he enters the synagogue at Nazareth...He reads Isaiah 61.1ff and proclaims 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'"[12] With respect to parables "in Matthew 13.14f Jesus quotes Isaiah 6.9f in explanation of his employment of parables. However difficult it may be to understand his teaching on the 'negative' purpose of parables, it must not be overlooked that Jesus is here presented as introducing the quotation with the words 'in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says,' and of applying in pesher fashion the words of the prophet to his own ministry."[13] Here is another example of Jesus' pesher approach to biblical texts. "In Mark 12.10f.; Matthew 21.42; Luke 20.17, Jesus

concludes his allusion to the well-known parable of the vineyard (Isaiah 5.1ff.), and his not-so-veiled rebuke of the people's rejection of the son with the quotation of Psalm 118.22f.: 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. This was from the Lord, and it is marvellous in our eyes.'(Presumably the author's own translation)...His point obviously concerns fulfilment of the psalmist's words in his own rejection and exaltation."[14]

(iv) Allegorical Interpretation

"The most prominent Jewish allegorist of the first century was Philo of Alexandria...While a Jew, Philo was the inheritor of Stoic and Platonic ideas...Philo usually treated the Old Testament as a body of symbols given by God for man's spiritual and moral benefit, which must be understood other than in a literal and historical fashion".[15] J. Massie writes that Philo

> reduced allegory to a system of his own, with canons similar to those of the Palestinian Haggadists, but freely used, and adapted to philosophical ends by means of the Platonic doctrine of ideas...The facts often disappeared, the narrative was turned upside down and, in the handling of the characters of the Old Testament story, the unities were entirely ignored. So, when it is said that Jacob took a stone for his pillow, what he did, as the archetype of a self-disciplining soul, was to put one of the incorporeal intelligences of that holy ground close to his mind; and under the pretext of going to sleep, he in reality, found repose in the intelligence which he had chosen, that on it he might lay the burden of his life.[16]

I hope to write about this way of treating the scriptures

in the next chapter. But at this point suffice it to say that what began as a Jewish way of interpretation was continued in the Christian church.

4.3 **Summary**

From these Jewish approaches to the Scriptures we see the intention to open up the possibilities of interpretation. The inventive minds of Jewish scholars found ways of exploring the richness which is contained in the records of their community. An exploration which led to the discovery of their own identity as the chosen people of God, since they believed that God spoke to them as they wrestled with the text of Scripture.

Notes

1. M.H.Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc. 1988) p.85.

2. F.L.Cross, The Oxford Dictionary of the Church (Oxford: O.U.P. 1957) p.899.

3. Richard Longenecker, Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period Quoted from Mish.Ber 1.3 on Deuteronomy 6.7 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1975) p.28.

4. S. Horovitz, "Midrash", Jewish Encyclopedia VIII (1904) p.548.

5. J. Bowker, Targums and Rabbinic Literature (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1969) p.315.

6. Rabbi Dr J. H. Hertz (Translator and Commentator), Authorized Daily Prayer Book (London: Soncino, 1946) p.43.

7. b. Sanh. 34a. Quoted in Longenecker, op.cit., p.19.

8. Bemidbar Rabbah 11th - 12th Century A. D. Quoted in Longenecker, op.cit., p.19.

9. Longenecker, op.cit., p.19.

10. Bowker, op.cit., p.315.

11. F.F.Bruce, Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts, (Den Haag: Van Keulen, 1959) p.812. Quoted in Longenecker, op.cit., p.42.

12. Longenecker, op.cit., p.70.

13. Longenecker, ibid., p.72.

14. Longenecker, ibid., p.71.

15. Longenecker, ibid., pp.45-46.

16. James Hastings, "Allegory", Dictionary of the Bible Volume 1 (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1903) p.65.

Chapter 5

PARABLES AND THEIR INTERPRETERS

5.1 Allegory

As has been noted already one of the ways of interpreting Scripture has been to treat the text as allegory, even though the author did not necessarily intend the text to be understood in this manner. Parables have been treated in this way. Making an allegory where it was not intended by the author we shall call allegorizing. This treatment of texts has its roots in times well before the Christian era.

Before proceeding further what are we to understand by the word allegory? It is derived from the Greek word ἀλληγορία. "The substantive ἀλληγορία, with its verb ἀλληγορεύω, is derived from ἄλλο, something else, and ἀγορεύω, I speak; and is defined by Heraclitus (Heraclides ?) - probably of the first century A.D. - as follows:...the mode of speech which says other things (than the mere letter) and hints at different things from what it expresses, is appropriately called allegory."[1] It is "a story in figurative language whose several points refer individually and collectively to some other event which is both concealed and revealed in the narration."[2] "An allegory... communicates to a person what he already knows, though it communicates it in symbolic and altered fashion. The other side of this is that it conceals its

intended meaning...from those who do not have the necessary knowledge to decipher it."[3] An early Biblical example is in the Wisdom of Solomon, which was probably written by a Hellenistic Jew of Alexandria in the latter part of the first century before Christ.[4] Referring to Aaron, it is written: "For on his long robe the whole world was depicted, and the glories of the ancestors were engraved on the four rows of stones, and your majesty was on the diadem upon his head."(Wisdom 18.24). "The allegorical interpretation of Scripture...was frequently applied to the Old Testament by New Testament writers, the term itself being used by Saint Paul in Galatians 4.24, 'Which things contain an allegory'(Revised Version, 1881)".[5] He is referring to the children of Hagar and Sarah. In an allegorical sense he understood Hagar and Sarah as the present Jerusalem and the Jerusalem above.

5.2 **Philo the Allegorist**

Philo, a Jew living in Alexandria at about 20 B.C. until 50 A.D., was steeped in the teachings of Plato. He attempted to interpret the Bible not necessarily in its most obvious, literal meaning but allegorically. Significantly for Philo "the allegorical interpretation of Scripture...enabled him to discover much of Greek philosophy in the Old Testament."[6] This method of allegorical interpretation of Philo became influential in the Christian school of theology in Alexandria, notably in the writings of Origen.(c.185 A.D. - c.254 A.D.) "The

contrast between the literal and the spiritual or mystic sense of Scripture dominates Origen's exegesis. His references to the 'friends of the letter', to the difficulties of the literalists, to the necessity for allegory are constant and pronounced. In some passages there is no literal sense."[7] Although it has had its critics the allegorical approach to Biblical interpretation has persisted up to the nineteenth century.

5.3 Earlier Critics of Allegorizing

In sympathy with some modern thinking, Porphyry, a neoplatonist philosopher (c.232 A.D.- c.303 A.D.), was strongly critical of the allegorizing method. Eusebius quotes Porphyry's scathing comments.

> In their eagerness to find, not a way to reject the depravity of the Jewish Scriptures, but a means of explaining it away, they resorted to interpretations which cannot be reconciled or harmonized with those scriptures, and which provide not so much a defence of the original authors as a fulsome advertisement for the interpreters. "Enigmas" is the pompous name they give to the perfectly plain statements of Moses, glorifying them as oracles full of hidden mysteries, and bewitching the critical faculty by their extravagant nonsense...This absurd method must be attributed to a man whom I met while I was still quite young...I refer to Origen.[8]

Centuries later Martin Luther was to write in a similar vein. "No violence is to be done to the words of God, whether by man or angel; but they are to be retained in their simplest meaning wherever possible, and to be understood in their grammatical and literal sense unless the context plainly forbids, lest we give our adversaries

occasion to make a mockery of all the scriptures. Thus Origen was repudiated, in olden times, because he despised the grammatical sense..."[9]

5.4 **Examples of Allegorization**

Saint Augustine of Hippo(354 A.D.- 430 A.D.) allegorized the parable of The Good Samaritan (Luke 10.25-37). "The man is Adam, Jerusalem the heavenly city, Jericho the moon - the symbol of mortality; the thieves are the devil and his angels who strip the man of immortality by persuading him to sin and so leave him (spiritually) half dead, the priest and the levite represent the Old Testament, the Samaritan Christ, the beast his flesh which he assumed at the incarnation, the inn is the church, and the innkeeper the apostle Paul."[10]

In the nineteenth century Archbishop Chenevix Trench(1807-1886) interprets the parable of The Good Samaritan allegorically.

> Regarding it in this mystical sense, the traveller will be the personified human nature, or Adam as the representative and head of our race. He has forsaken Jerusalem, the heavenly city, the city of the vision of peace, and is going down to Jericho, the profane city, the city under a curse (Joshua 5.26; I Kings 16.34). But no sooner has he thus left the holy city and the presence of his God and turned his desires toward the world, than he falls into the hands of him who is at once a robber and a murderer(John 8.44), and is by him and his evil angels stripped of the robe of his original righteousness, grievously wounded, left covered with almost mortal strokes, every sinful passion and desire a gash from which the life-blood of his soul is streaming. But for all this he is not absolutely dead; for as the utmost cares of the Samaritan would have been spent in vain upon the poor traveller, had the spark of life been

> wholly extinct, so a restoration for man would have been impossible, had there been nothing to restore, no spark of divine life, which by a heavenly breath might be fanned into flame; no truth in him, which might be extricated from the unrighteousness in which it was detained.[11]

While it is noticeable that some items of interpretation are similar to those of Saint Augustine (Adam, the heavenly city, and the evil angels), there are distinctive differences.

5.5 **Gospel Parables as Allegories**

How can we assess the validity of these allegorical interpretations? There are gospel parables, admittedly only a few, where an allegorical interpretation is given in the text itself. Here are some examples. The Parable of the Sower(Mark 4.14-20). "The sower sows the word..." The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares(Matthew 13.36-43). "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man..." The Parable of the Dragnet(Matthew 13.47-50). "Men... drew it(a net) ashore and sat down and sorted the good into vessels but threw away the bad. So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous."(Matthew 13.48-49) One could perhaps include The Parable of the Wicked Tenants(Mark 12.9-11) where the details of the parable are accepted as applying to some of the hearers. But one has to say that this parable is like most of the other parables in the gospels in that the onus of interpretation is upon the hearer. Since allegorical interpretations are rarely

given in the gospels, and then only in more private situations(Mark 4.10,34; Matthew 13.36), it would seem that generally speaking the meaning is left open to the hearer's response. But in the case of the allegorical interpretation of the Parable of the Sower it is possible that interpretations were given since the disciples' private enquiries implied that they were already beginning to respond to the parables. It becomes helpful, therefore, to take the disciples, who are privy to the mysteries of the kingdom(Mark 4.11), a step further. I am indebted to Curtis for this observation. On the other hand Rawlinson writes: "It is difficult not to think that what is here presented to us is rather the way in which the parable was currently applied when Mark was written than any authentic word of Jesus."[12] However, most commonly, as in the case of The Parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus gives no interpretation. Instead he may prompt thought by asking a question: "Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"(Luke 10.36) Since the lawyer is told to "Go and do likewise", it would seem that the parable is intended to stimulate the imagination, initiate reflection and activate the will.

5.6 **Modern Critics of Allegorical Interpretation**

Gustav Adolph Jülicher(1857-1938) took the radical step of rejecting the allegorical interpretation of parables in his book, Die Gleichnisreden Jesu(1899-1910).

Jeremias writes about Jülicher's thesis. Jülicher's "struggle to free the parables from the fantastic and arbitrary allegorical interpretations of every detail caused Julicher to fall into a fatal error. In his view the surest safeguard against such treatment lay in regarding the parables as a piece of real life and in drawing from each of them a single idea and (here lay the error) of the widest possible generality. The broadest application will prove to be the true one. 'The story of the rich man and poor Lazarus was intended to induce joy in a life of suffering, and fear of the life of pleasure.'"(Luke 16.19-31)[13] According to G. B. Caird, commenting on Jülicher's theory, the one point always turned out to be a moral platitude. Furthermore Jülicher "failed to distinguish between an intended allegory and allegorism".[14] "To allegorize is to impose on a story a hidden meaning which the original author neither intended nor envisaged."[15] So Caird in criticizing Jülicher is allowing the possibility of some parables being allegorical, such as the examples I have mentioned above. An even more radical criticism of Jülicher's position is given by Archbishop Philip Carrington.

> The idea that the "mystery" of God's kingdom was "given" to a school of disciples, and that it can best be talked about in the language of "parables" of riddles, which in turn not everybody understands, is an offence to the tradition of Protestant theology which takes seriously the literary theories of the learned and critical Jülicher; and yet, for all that, the "Kingdom of God" remains a mystery for the systematic or analytical theologian...The same

> is true of the parables themselves, though their reduction to reason and order has been confidently asserted. The disciples of Jülicher contend that they are simple illustrations of some spiritual and moral truth, that is to say, some general formula which must have been in existence prior to the parable, and governs the whole meaning of the parable, once it has been discovered. Each parable has but a single point, which is obvious once it has been understood; after that the usefulness of the parable has come to an end; it has served its purpose and has no further function. There is no mystery or hidden truth, or blindness on the part of some. The verses which make these assertions can very easily be got rid of; Mark himself(or some predecessor) was the inventor of this philosophy of spiritual vision, and has attributed his views to Jesus; he has interpolated it into the tradition. Nobody can prove otherwise, of course, but it certainly seems most improbable, especially in view of other sayings of Jesus which are equally mystical and equally disturbing: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."(Matthew 11.25) "Blessed are your eyes for ye see, and your ears for ye hear...many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear and have not heard it."(Luke 10.23-24)[16]

C. H. Dodd(1884-1973) follows the lead of Jülicher. "The typical parable...presents one single point of comparison".[17] But in order to promote this view he has to reject what is given in the text as allegorical interpretation by Jesus.

> The crucial passage is Mark 4.11-20. Jesus, in answer to a question of His disciples, says: "To you is granted the mystery of the Kingdom of God, but to those outside everything comes in parables, in order that they may look and look but never see, listen and listen but never understand, lest they should be converted and forgiven"; and then follows the interpretation of the parable of the sower. Now this whole passage is strikingly unlike in language and style to the majority of the sayings of Jesus.

> Its vocabulary includes (within this short space) seven words which are not proper to the rest of the Synoptic record. All seven are characteristic of the vocabulary of Paul, and most of them occur also in other apostolic writers. These facts create at once a presumption that we have here not a part of the primitive tradition of the words of Jesus, but a piece of apostolic teaching.
>
> Further, the interpretation offered is confused. The seed is the Word: yet the crop which comes up is composed of various classes of people. The former interpretation suggests the Greek idea of the "seminal word"; while the latter is closely akin to a similitude in the Apocalypse of Ezra: "As the farmer sows over the ground many seeds, and plants a multitude of plants, but in the season not all that have been planted take root, so also of those who have been sowed in the world not all shall be saved."(2 Esdras 8.41)[18]

In support of Dodd's contention that the allegorical interpretation is not part of the primitive tradition of the Parable of the Sower, it is significant that the version of the parable in the Gospel of Thomas does not append an allegorical interpretation such as we find in the synoptic gospels.[19] While these propositions of Dodd are not unreasonable nevertheless they are not certainties based on irrefutable evidence.

5.7 **The Allegory Defended**

The passage quoted above, from 2 Esdras 8.41, about the farmer who sows many seeds, was probably written by a Palestinian Jew later than The Parable of the Sower of the gospels, "near the close of the first century".[20] Is it possible that this was a commonly used illustration from Jewish teaching, predating the period of Jesus? If so, then it is possible that Jesus was using and commenting on

a wellknown Jewish theme, applying the details to His own understanding about the operations of the Kingdom of God. Furthermore, in contrast to C.H.Dodd, Austin Farrer accepts the parable and its explanation together as an indivisible, textual whole. "When Christ was asked for an interpretation, he first gave the general clue (the sower sows the word) and then went over the story, drawing out of it fresh divinations of spiritual truth. What else would you expect him to do?"[21]

5.8 The Gospel Setting of the Parables

We come now to a distinctive feature of Dodd's writing about parables. "The teaching of Jesus is...related to a brief and tremendous crisis in which He is the principal figure and which indeed His appearance brought about. Thus we should expect the parables to bear upon the actual and critical situation in which Jesus and His hearers stood; and when we ask after their application, we must look first, not to the field of general principles, but to the particular setting in which they were delivered. The task of the interpreter of the parables is to find out, if he can, the setting of a parable in the situation contemplated by the Gospels, and hence the application which would suggest itself to one who stood in that situation...We cannot without question assume that the setting in which we have a parable is its original setting...It is only where something in the parable itself seems to link it with some special phase of

the ministry that we dare press the precise connection."[22]

5.9 **The Universality of the Parable**

The particularities of a parable may be helpfully illuminated by a knowledge of its setting, but its universality and timelessness also need to be evident. Otherwise its relevance is limited. One attempt to understand the universal and timeless quality of the images and symbols of parables is instanced by the psychological understanding of Dan Otto Via. It is quoted by Mary Ann Tolbert:

> Via has articulated a further interpretation of the Prodigal Son based on Jungian psychology. In this interpretation the relationship between the prodigal and the father is one of the Jungian ego searching for its own consciousness and independence from the archetype of the Self: "The younger son leaves him because the ego must separate from the Self in order to achieve consciousness. But dissociation leads to alienation as is reflected in the son's sense of having sinned against his father(Self)"...This alienation leads ultimately to a reintegration of the ego and the Self in the Jungian perspective by coming to terms with the shadow(elder brother), just as the prodigal's departure leads ultimately to his return.[23]

This way of thinking is of course only accessible to those knowledgeable about the theories of C.G.Jung. The disadvantage about this way of psychological interpretation is that it imposes a frame of thought upon the parable, which, as it were, takes away the responsibility of the reader.

5.10 **Summary**

From these procedures it would seem that the hope of

interpreters was to avoid a misreading of a parable. It was assumed that the author's intended meaning could be understood if only the text was approached with the appropriate strategy. That strategy had been created by scholars, refining and critizing the methods of their predecessors. Without these controls the interpretation of Scripture would have been arbitrary.

Notes

1. James Hastings, "Allegory", Dictionary of the Bible, Volume 1, (Edinburgh: T.and T.,Clark, 1903) p.64.

2. John Dominic Crossan, In Parables, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985) p.8.

3. Dan Otto Via, The Parables, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980) pp.7-8.

4. "Apocrypha: The Wisdom of Solomon", The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha, Revised Standard Version (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973) p.102.

5. F.L.Cross, "Allegory", The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (London: Oxford University Press, 1957) p.37.

6. Cross, "Philo", ibid., p.1065.

7. R.B.Tollinton, "De Principiis IV ii 5", Selections from the Commentaries and Homilies of Origen London: S.P.C.K., 1929) p.xxvii.

8. Eusebius, The History of the Church, Translated by G.A.Williamson (New York: Dorset Press, 1984) p.258.

9. Robert M. Grant, A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible, Revised Edition, (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1965) pp.108-109.

10. G.B.Caird, The Language and Imagery of the Bible (London: Duckworth, 1980) p.165.

11. Richard Chenevix Trench, "The Good Samaritan", Notes on the Parables of Our Lord (London: Macmillan, 1877) pp.322-323.

12. A.E.J.Rawlinson, St Mark (London: Methuen, 1927) p.52.

13. G. A. Jülicher, Die Gleichnisreden Jesu II (Tübingen, 1899) p.638. Quoted from Joachim Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus (London: S.C.M., 1985) p.19.

14. G.B. Caird, The Language and Imagery of the Bible (London: Duckworth, 1980) pp.161-162.

15. Caird, ibid., p.165.

16. Philip Carrington, According to Mark (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960) p.101.

17. C.H.Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (Glasgow: Fontana Books, 1961) p.18.

18. Dodd, ibid., pp.14-15.

19. Robert W. Funk, "Gospel of Thomas, 9", New Gospel Parallels Volume Two (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985) p.111.

20. "Apocrypha" The New Oxford Annotated Bible op.cit., p.23.

21. Austin Farrer, A Study in Mark (London: Dacre Press, 1951) p.245.

22. Dodd, op.cit., pp.23-24.

23. Mary Ann Tolbert, Perspectives on the Parables (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979) p.29.

Chapter 6

THE LITERARY CONTEXTS OF SOME MARKAN PARABLES

According to the Gospel of Mark, the parables would seem to be improvisations. "With what can we compare the Kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it?"(Mark 4.30) From what contexts in the gospel did these improvisations arise? Let us look at chapters 2 and 3 of Mark's Gospel. In these there are the following parables:

2.17	Physician
2.19f	Bridegroom and 'Sons of Bridechamber'
2.21	Clothes
2.22	Wineskins
3.25-7	Divided Kingdom
	Divided House
	Strong Man[1]

6.1 **Healing and Forgiveness**

In chapter 2.1-12 there is the healing of a paralytic with the forgiveness of his sins. After this Jesus is described as sitting with tax collectors and sinners.(Mark 2.15) For befriending sinners he is questioned by the scribes of the Pharisees. "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"(Mark 2.16) This question is the occasion that prompts the first parable recorded in Mark's Gospel. "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous,

but sinners."(Mark 2.17) Jesus could have defended himself by some pronouncement or rational argument. But the parable allows his critics an opportunity to reflect. Who are the well or righteous, the sick or sinners? Who are those who do not need a physician?

6.2 **The New Age of Grace**

The occasion of the second parable also follows a question. "Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people came and said to him, 'Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?'"(Mark 2.18) To this Jesus replies: "The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day."(Mark 2.19-20) Compared with the disciples of John and the Pharisees a special celebration is appropriate for the disciples of Jesus. The parable provokes reflection. Who is the bridegroom? And why is he called a bridegroom? Who are the guests? Why are they celebrating a wedding feast? When and why should the bridegroom be taken away? From questions like these Jesus' hearers may begin to think about the purpose of 'the bridegroom'. Jesus by this parable opens up new areas of thought for his hearers. It seems unlikely that Jesus is abrogating fasting as he is reported as saying, "They will fast in that day." However, Jesus is making

some contrast between his own disciples and those of John and the Pharisees. Is it that Jesus is inaugurating an age of grace which needs therefore to be celebrated with "a wedding feast"? "The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."(John 1.17) If so, the newness of the age is expressed in the two parables that follow in Mark 2.21-22. "No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins." The "old cloak" and the "old wineskins" could possibly throw light on John and the Pharisees; but the "unshrunk cloth" and the "new wine" could give some clue to the newness of Jesus' initiatives. They are parables about the incompatibility of the new with the old. The fasting of the disciples of John and the Pharisees is thus not challenged; but rather, by the oblique teaching of the parable Jesus prepares his hearers to consider the implications of a new beginning. The parable does not impose an understanding of Jesus' mission but waits for the perception of those ready to hear.

6.3 **The Exorcism of Satan**

In chapter 3.11 it says of Jesus: "Whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and shouted, 'You are the Son of God.'" In response to this

the "scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of demons he casts out demons.'"(Mark 3.22) To challenge this kind of thinking Jesus gives a question and parables for his critics to ponder. "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered."(Mark 3.23-27) Having challenged the scribes with questions, Jesus offers a parable about the strong man. This parable gives his hearers space to ponder about the binding of a strong man. Who has the power to bind a strong man that he may plunder his house? Presumably by an oblique reference to himself as the one who binds and plunders, Jesus is teaching those who are ready to hear what he is doing when he casts out demons.

6.4 **Parables: A Challenge to Critics**

From these examples it would seem that the parables are responses to the challenges of criticism. Instead of replying in kind Jesus is shown as giving parables. If the parable should be received, not only would the criticism be answered but the premise of the criticism would be questioned. The critic, if he or she should take

up the parable, can become his or her own critic.

6.5 **The Parable: A Commentary on the Signs of the Kingdom**

Turning to other contexts for the parables in Mark's gospel, consider the order of events as they are reported. Jesus has his personal role revealed to him at the time of his baptism. "You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased."(Mark 1.11) The role of sonship is tested on the occasion of his temptations.(Matthew 4.1-11//Luke 4.1-13) This is followed by his preaching: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."(Mark 1.15) A paraphrase might read as follows: "The significant time or season of God is completed, and for this reason the rule of God is ready to be received. Have a change of heart and trust in this good news". It is a significant fact that the healing works of Christ are associated with the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom. "Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness."(Matthew 9.35) Furthermore exorcism is a sign of the presence of the Kingdom. "If it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons, then the Kingdom of God has come to you."(Luke 11.20) The Kingdom is a challenge to the rule of Satan. Luke 10.17-18: "The seventy returned with joy, saying,'Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!' He (Jesus) said to

them, 'I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning'." The mighty works are the signs of the kingdom. W. Grundmann writes about mighty works. "The gift of the spirit..confers on Christ his authority (ἐξουσία)--an authority which he has the power(δύναμις) to exercise in expelling demons or healing the sick."[2]

By these healing works Jesus is showing that the rule of God is active. The parable can be a counterpart to the saving sign of the Kingdom. Consider the healing of the paralytic: "'But so that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins' - he said to the paralytic - 'I say to you, stand up, take up your mat and go to your home.'"(Mark 2.10-11) The parable that follows it is a counterpart: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."(Mark 2.17) The outward act or event is complemented by the inward reflection prompted by the parable. Jesus is the physician who heals sickness and sin. He heals the whole man, body and soul. Thus the parable can illuminate the saving event that is a sign of the Kingdom of God.

Notes

1. J.D.Drury, The Parables in the Gospels (London: S.P.C.K., 1985) p.39.

2. Kittel and Friedrich, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1985) p.189.

Chapter 7

THE GOOD SAMARITAN: A STUDY IN DIALOGUE

7.1 The Dialogue within the Parable

In the dialogue that provides the context for the parable of The Good Samaritan(Luke 10.25-37) Jesus responds obliquely to the lawyer's questions. The lawyer asks: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"(v.25) It is noteworthy that Jesus does not answer his question to tell him what he should do. Instead Jesus poses questions: "What is written in the Law? What do you read there?"(v.26) Jesus does at least draw him out on the subject of the Law. The lawyer quotes Deuteronomy 6.4 and Leviticus 19.18: "You shall love the Lord your God...and your neighbour as yourself."(v.27) Jesus adds: "Do this, and you will live."(v.28) By eliciting the law of love, commonly combined in this form,[1] Jesus leads the lawyer to answer to own question.

To "justify himself" the lawyer proposes another question. "And who is my neighbour?"(v.29) Jesus does not answer the lawyer's question by a definition as might be expected. He tells the story of The Good Samaritan. "A man was going down from Jerusalem..."(v.30) And by the question on the parable, "Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"(v.36) Jesus elicits the response: "The one who showed him mercy."(v.37) The lawyer's question is

in fact answered by his own words. The one who shows mercy is a neighbour. It would seem that Jesus allows the lawyer to find an answer to his own question. Could this be true of other parables, namely that they allow a hearer or reader to find his own understanding?

7.2 **Rational and Imaginative Thinking**

There appear to be two kinds of thinking in the conversation between the lawyer and Jesus. The one is a legal discussion and the other is an appeal to the imagination. In Jewish thought legal discussion, explanation and definition has been called Halakah; whereas the kind of thought that makes its appeal to the imagination with story and parable has been called Haggadah. Rabbi Abraham Heschel compares Halakah and Haggadah.

> Halakah is the rationalisation and schematization of living; it defines, specifies, sets measure and limit, placing life into an exact system. Haggadah deals with man's ineffable relations to God, to other men, and to the world. Halakah deals with details, with each commandment separately; Haggadah with the whole of life, with the totality of religious life. Halakah deals with the law, Haggadah with the meaning of the law...Halakah prescribes, Haggadah suggests; Halakah decrees, Haggadah inspires...To maintain that the essence of Judaism consists exclusively of Halakah is as erroneous as to maintain that the essence of Judaism consists exclusively of Haggadah. The interrelationship of Halakah and Haggadah is the very heart of Judaism. Halakah without Haggadah is dead, Haggadah without Halakah is wild.[2]

Jesus affirms both kinds of thinking in his dealings with the lawyer. In asking, "What is written in the Law? What

do you read there?" Jesus, according to Heschel's description, "deals with the law"; by his enquiry Jesus leads the lawyer to define, specify, set measure and limit. This is Halakah. Whereas in dealing with the lawyer's second question, "Who is my neighbour?", Jesus answers in the manner of Haggadah. As Heschel says, it deals "with man's ineffable relations to...other men, and to the world,...with the whole of life, with the totality of religious life,...with the meaning of the law...(It) suggests (and)...inspires". Furthermore, by a story, Jesus offers the lawyer the opportunity to imagine what it means to be a neighbour. By telling a story Jesus invites the lawyer to use his imagination. The difference between these two strategies could be significant.

7.3 **The Left and Right Brain Hemispheres**

Murray Cox and Alice Theilgaard describe two approaches to understanding and perception, corresponding to the left and right brain hemispheres. "The functions of the left hemisphere may be described by such adjectives as: verbal, analytical, abstract, rational, and temporal; whereas the functions of the right hemisphere may be characterized as: preverbal, synthetic, concrete, intuitive, and spatial...The brain has two strategies at its disposal. One is synthetic, analogical, ikonic(imaginative), and intuitive". This is similar to Haggadah. "Whereas the other is univocal, digital, conceptual and abstract".[3] This has affinities with the

rational concerns of Halakah. The value of the parable is that it allows a link between these two ways of thinking. F.M.Levin says, "Metaphors serve as bridges in a number of ways. At first they allow for the linking up of the two hemispheres. This results from the fact that metaphors constitute an ambiguous stimulus object that can arouse activity in each hemisphere by appealing to the left hemisphere linguistically and the right hemisphere by non-linguistic means."[4] Without the dual response of an "ambiguous stimulus" the mind is only partially engaged. Cox and Theilgaard comment as follows: "If thinking is drained of ikonic content, the result is alienated insipid intellectualization."[5]

7.4 The Reader's Response: Dialogue with the Parable

The parable of the Good Samaritan was the result of an interaction between a lawyer and Jesus. But what value is there in our reading about such an interaction? And for what purpose was the parable recorded for posterity? As between the lawyer and Jesus, can we have an imaginary dialogue with the people in the Lukan account, allowing our thoughts and questions to interact with the text? St Ignatius of Loyola in his Spiritual Exercises has "a form of fantasy prayer" which "consists in taking a scene from the life of Christ and reliving it, taking part in it as if it were actually occurring and you were a participant in the event."[6] Is this the opportunity that the parable offers us?

7.5 **Conversation: A Model of Engagement**

In the engagement of the mind with the metaphors of a parable conversation may provide us with a model. A conversation proceeds by association, one image or thought leading to another. Similarly in reading a parable it becomes like a conversation in one respect. From the parable images and thoughts can be evoked by association in the mind of the reader.

7.6 **Engagement Through Questioning.**

Not only associations but also questions give movement to a dialogue. The questions between the lawyer and Jesus open up their thinking. Even to something as inanimate as a text questions can be asked, in the hope that answers may come as the fruit of reflection. Answers or conclusions may not be readily forthcoming in the short or long term, but at least the questions can be a programme for thinking. Between the lawyer and Jesus there were several kinds of questions. Questions like these which follow could be posed to a text. What should be done?(Luke 10.25) What may be discerned about the meaning of this idea?(Luke 10.29) How does the act reveal the nature of the man?(Luke 10.36) While it is apparent that the question hopes for an answer, the answer may not be easily found. Nevertheless the question can open up new perspectives and insights. Some would say that it is pointless asking a question that does not seem capable of an answer. Perhaps some questions are incapable of an

answer because they lead us to the mystery which is God, but not necessarily to define or understand that mystery? "Man raises himself toward God by the questions he asks Him...That is the true dialogue. Man questions God and God answers. But we don't understand His answers. We can't understand them. Because they come from the depth of the soul...they stay there until death."[7] Elie Wiesel says "one must never avoid questions, as one must not turn one's gaze away from the abyss."[8] Is he referring here to the abyss of ignorance and uncertainty? "Who says that the essential question has an answer? The essence of man is to be a question; and the essence of the question is to be without answer...The depth, the meaning, the very salt of man is his constant desire to ask the question ever deeper within himself, to feel ever more intimately the existence of an unknowable answer."[9] The question could be part of the struggle of faith reaching out beyond understanding. Elie Wiesel says, "True faith lies beyond questions."[10] Therefore in the questions we put to parables we are attempting to discern, in the first place, not so much the meaning of the parable but our response to its enigmas. The reader and the parable create a partnership in which they work on each other.

In conversation, questioning to discover people's opinions can lead either to deep disturbances or to the stimulation of interacting thoughts. In a similar manner a reader's questioning of a parable may lead to a

disturbance or subversion of accepted values. In the parable of The Good Samaritan the hearers were no doubt disturbed by its implications. To the Jews in the time of Jesus a good Samaritan would be a contradiction in terms. Although it might be understood that the priest and the Levite did not act with compassion for religious reasons, their lack of concern could only cast a slur on their religious profession. By this challenge to expectations a disruption is created. A new set of values is demanded such as is implied in the parable. This change is like a paradigm shift.

7.7 **Paradigm Shift**

In the context of science "Kuhn defines a paradigm as a 'core cluster of concepts' associated with a recognized scientific achievement or set of achievements."[11] It would seem that we interpret what we read by the complex of ideas and values which we have acquired or inherited. When our 'core cluster of concepts' can no longer grasp the unfamiliar values and ideas we need a paradigm shift, a change of model. This is described in an experiment.

> Bruner and Postman asked experimental subjects to identify on short and controlled exposure a series of playing cards. Many of the cards were normal, but some were made anomalous, e.g. a red six of spades and a black four of hearts...Even on the shortest exposures many subjects identified most of the cards, and after a small increase all the subjects identified them all. For the normal cards these identifications were usually correct but the anomalous cards were almost always identified without apparent hesitation or puzzlement, as normal. The black four of hearts might, for example, be identified as the four of either spades or hearts. Without

> any awareness of trouble, it was immediately fitted to one of the conceptual categories prepared by prior experience...Further increase of exposure resulted in still more hesitation and confusion until finally, and sometimes quite suddenly, most subjects would produce the correct identification without hesitation. Moreover, after doing this with two or three of the anomalous cards, they would have little further difficulty with the others. A few subjects, however, were never able to make the requisite adjustment of their categories.[12]

A few New Testament parables express disturbing anomalies. Here are two examples. The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15.11-32) tells of an injustice. The wastrel is welcomed with lavish entertainment; the dutiful elder brother is not even offered the opportunity for a modest party with his friends. The Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard(Matthew 20.1-16) describes an unfairness. Irrespective of the time they work in the vineyard they are all paid the same. The acceptance of such anomalies requires a different paradigm. With a changed paradigm we can make sense of a different scheme of values.

7.8 **Summary**

In short, by a "conversation" with a parable it can "read" our responses and challenge us to think afresh. This is achieved by the associations we bring to the parable, by the questions we put to it, and by a required paradigm shift.

Notes

1. James H. Charlesworth (Editor), "Testament XII Patriarchs, Issachar 5.2 and Dan. 5.3." The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Volume 1 (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1983 pp.803, 809, respectively.

2. The Assembly of Rabbis of the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain (Editors), Forms of Prayer for Jewish Worship (London: The Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, 1977) p.361.

3. Murray Cox and Alice Theilgaard, Mutative Metaphors in Psychotherapy (London: Tavistock Publications, 1987) p.203.

4. F.M.Levin, "Metaphor, Affect and Arousal: How Interpretations Might Work." The Annual of Psychoanalysis (New York: International Universities Press, 1980) pp.231-245.

5. Cox and Theilgaard, op.cit., p.137.

6. Anthony de Mello: Sadhana, a Way to God (Anand, India: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1979) p.73.

7. Elie Wiesel, Night (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981) pp.14-15.

8. Elie Wiesel, Four Hasidic Masters and Their Struggle Against Melancholy (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978) p.59.

9. Elie Wiesel, The Town Beyond the Wall (New York: Random House, 1965) p.176.

10. Elie Wiesel, Four Hasidic Masters, p.59.

11. George Gale, Theory of Science (New York: McGraw-Hill Incorporated, 1979) p.74.

12. J.S.Bruner and Leo Postman, "On the Perception of Incongruity: A Paradigm," Journal of Personality, XVIII (1949) pp.206-23.

Chapter 8

TOWARDS A NAÏVE READING

8.1 Interpretation through Authorial Contexts

In former times literary criticism has attempted to discover in a text the author's intended meaning. Thus it became important to study writings by the same author, writings external to the text. Since there is the view which says that a text is the product of the moment in the author's life that gave it birth it was deemed necessary to know about that moment. The study of diaries, letters and autobiographical writings could provide a framework in which the author's writing could find its bearings. These extrinsic writings could provide guidelines; they could adumbrate the characteristics and norms of the author's thought. The perspectives gathered could often illuminate the meaning of a text. Thus it was said that something approaching a definitive interpretation could be attempted.

8.2 Authorial Intention

But valuable as the impressive weight of critical learning has been in attempting to find a frame of reference by which a reader could respond to an author's text it has been thought that this approach needed to be reconsidered. In 1946 W.K.Wimsatt and M.C.Beardsley challenged the possibility of knowing precisely what an author's intended meaning is. "One must ask how a critic

expects to get an answer to the question about intention. How is he to find out what the poet tried to do? If the poet succeeded in doing it, then the poem itself shows what he was trying to do. And if the poet did not succeed, then the poem is not adequate evidence, and the critic must go outside the poem - for evidence of an intention that did not become effective in the poem."[1]

T.R.Wright writes: "Wimsatt seemed to go even further, quoting Archibald Macleish's line, 'A poem should not mean but be.'"[2] In this way of thinking the text is to be read without reference to external factors. The reader has to find within the text its own meanings; this is called formalism. M.H.Abrams writes that formalism "views literary language as self-focused; its function is not to make extrinsic references, but to draw attention to its own 'formal' features - that is, to interrelationships among the linguistic signs themselves."[3]

8.3 **A Naïve Reading**

"Meaning has no effective existence outside of its realization in the mind of the reader."[4] I propose to call this approach a naive reading, naïve in the sense of "characterized by unsophisticated or unconventional simplicity or artlessness".(The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary) Meeting a person without any previous knowledge of them enforces a concentration on what the person reveals of himself or herself, neither more nor less. The onus of understanding is upon the person who

goes out to meet another, alone with nothing except his or her native wit and intuition. There is no baggage of foreknowledge or prejudice. The naïve reader is tending towards this condition. He or she is like a child with a kind of ignorance in the present moment ready to appropriate the text.

8.4 The Appropriation of a Parable

To understand what is involved in the appropriation of a parable it will be helpful to compare it with other similar forms of writing. It is significant that C.G.Jung sees a relationship between the dream and the parable. "It is characteristic that dreams never express themselves in a logical abstract way but always in the language of parable or simile."[5] Furthermore he says that the meaning of the dream is contained within the dream itself. "The 'manifest' dream-picture is the dream itself and contains the whole meaning of the dream."[6] "To understand the dream's meaning I must stick as close as possible to the dream images."[7] Compare this with Lynn M. Poland, referring to Hans Frei: "The 'meaning' of the story is located nowhere but in the narrative sequence itself."[8] About the meaning of a dream Jung writes: "A dream image can mean anything or nothing. For that matter, does a thing or a fact ever mean anything in itself? The only certainty is that it is always man who interprets, who assigns meaning."[9] Terence Hawkes develops the same idea with regard to a literary text. "The critic need not

humbly efface himself before the work and submit to its demands; on the contrary, he actively constructs its meaning; he makes the work exist...None of these readings is wrong, they all add to the work. So, a work of literature ultimately consists of everything that has been said about it."[10] Similarly about dreams Jung writes that there has to be a flexibility of interpretation. "It is, indeed, a good thing that no valid method exists, for otherwise the meaning of the dream would be limited in advance, and would lose precisely that virtue which makes dreams so valuable for therapeutic purposes - their ability to offer new points of view."[11]

8.5. **The Effect of Parables**

Like the dream can we also say that the parable can have a therapeutic purpose? John Dominic Crossan says that "parables are stories which shatter the deep structure of our accepted world...They remove our defences and make us vulnerable to God."[12] At least by this reckoning parables can be profoundly disturbing before they are healing; they are a way to repentance (μετάνοια), or a change of heart and mind. But "the ultimate aim of interpretation is an appropriation of the text which gives rise to a new self-understanding."[13] But what does Lynn Poland mean by "an appropriation of the text"? Concerning appropriation The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary defines it as "The making of a thing private property, especially one's own; taking

to one's own use." Lynn Poland describes the effect of this "taking to one's own use" as a "new self-understanding".

8.6 **The Evolution of Meaning**

By an naive reading how can we find in the text itself the way to interpretation? At this point I think it would be helpful to consider how we learn to read. Firstly, we learn to recognize the separate symbols called letters. The letters only have the potentiality of meaning, a potentiality fulfilled when the letters are combined to form words. C-A-T spells cat. The first step towards meaning has been made. Later we recognize not merely the separate letters but words. And when words are combined in a phrase, there is a more complex unit of meaning. Phrases combine to form sentences. Sentences combine to form paragraphs. Paragraphs combine to form chapters. Chapters combine to form a book. Even books are added one to another to comprise the output of an author. At each stage, from the single letter to the books of an author's output, the awareness of meaning is increased. The smaller units of meaning are made more intelligible in the larger contexts of the author's writing. One place compared with another amplifies, corrects and refines the reader's comprehension.

Applying these principles to the reading of a parable, the reader has the responsibility of creating a complexity of thought from the fragments that compose the

parable. As Terence Hawkes says the reader "actively constructs the meaning."(see above) However, if the reader is not to use the text merely as a starting point for the whims of his random thoughts, he will need to comprehend what he reads by interrelating it to the other elements in the parable and to the parable as a whole. The reader makes his reading, constrained by the contexts within the parable.

However, this kind of reading may not find a sufficient breadth of context to comprehend a meaning, just as paragraphs need the larger contexts of chapters to be more meaningful. For a reading of one of the parables of Jesus, it would not only be necessary to study the parable itself, but also to consider it in relation to what precedes and follows it, and even to the whole gospel. "Parables constitute a collection - a 'corpus' - which is fully meaningful only as whole."[14] Moreover "we are led step by step to raise the unavoidable question of the function of the gospel itself - as a literary framework - for the understanding of the parables."[15]

Notes

1. W.K.Wimsatt, "The Intentional Fallacy", The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954) pp.4-5.

2. T.R.Wright, Theology and Literature (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988) p.34. Quoting from W.K.Wimsatt, The Verbal Icon (See above)

3. M.H.Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1985) p.236.

4. Jane P. Tompkins, "An Introduction to Reader-Response Criticism". Reader-Response Criticism. From Formalism to Post-Structuralism (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980) p.ix.

5. C.G.Jung, "General Aspects of Dream Psychology", The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, Collected Works of C.G.Jung, Volume 8, Edited By Sir Herbert Read, M. Fordham, and G. Adler (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963, 1970) paragraph 474.

6. C.G.Jung, "The Practical Use of Dream-analysis", The Practice of Psychotherapy, Collected Works, Volume 16, See above for further details of publication, paragraphs 294-352, Quoted in Anthony Storr, Jung Selected Writings (London: Fontana, 1983) p.177.

7. Jung quoted in Storr ibid., p.178.

8. Lynn M. Poland, Literary Criticism and Biblical Hermeneutics: A Critique of Formalist Approaches (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1985) p.122.

9. C.G.Jung, "The Aims of Psychotherapy", The Practice of Psychotherapy, Collected Works, Volume 16, See above for further details of publication, para.93, Quoted in C.G.Jung: Psychological Reflections, Selected and Edited by Jolande Jacobi (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974) pp.71-72.

10. Terence Hawkes, Structuralism and Semiotics (London: Routledge, 1988) p.157.

11. C.G.Jung, "The Meaning of Psychology for Modern Man", Civilization in Transition Collected Works, Volume 10, See above for further details of publication, paragraph 319. Quoted in C.G.Jung: Psychological Reflections, selected and edited by Jolande Jacobi (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974) p.75.

12. John Dominic Crossan: The Dark Interval. Towards a Theology of Story, (Harlow, Essex: Argus Communications, 1975) p.122.

13. Lynn M. Poland, op.cit., p.175.

14. Paul Ricoeur, "Biblical Hermeneutics",Semeia 4, Edited by J.D.Crossan, 1975, p.100.

15. Paul Ricoeur, op.cit., p.103.

Chapter 9

THE EYE OF THE HEART

9.1 The Inner Perception of the Heart

In the New Testament letter to the Ephesians there is this phrase: "With the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you." (Ephesians 1.18, πεφωτισμένους τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῆς καρδίας [ὑμῶν] εἰς τὸ εἰδέναι ὑμᾶς τίς ἐστιν ἡ ἐλπὶς τῆς κλήσεως αὐτοῦ) There is a passage in 2 Esdras 14.25 which illustrates this verse. The Lord "answered me and said,...I will light in your heart the lamp of understanding, which shall not be put out until what you are about to write is finished."[1] "The Divine illumination is no mere intellectual process: it begins with the heart, the seat of the affections and the will."[2] According to the Old Testament the heart means "Figuratively the 'innermost part of man'. 'Men look on the outward appearance, God looks on the heart'(I Samuel 16.7)...The heart is the seat of mental or spiritual powers and capacities."[3] In the New Testament "The heart is the seat of understanding, the source of thought and reflection "[4] In this chapter I hope to explore what it means to such a person who sees or perceives with the enlightenment of the heart.

9.2 The Artist

The intuitive perceptions of the heart vital to the

artist are also necessary for those who would enjoy and respond to the artist's work. Of a text it is notable that Friedrich Schleiermacher(1768-1834) writes that "only an artistically sound understanding can follow what is being said and written."[5] What does he mean by an "artistically sound understanding"? It would seem that there is a creative process in understanding. "To perceive, a beholder must create his own experience...Without an act of recreation the object is not perceived as a work of art."[6] This seems to imply that the reader can only perceive by creating a parallel "work of art" of his or her own making, to dream up as it were a thought of his own based on his reading of a text. Perhaps more modestly expressed it is like the listener who proposes a meaning by saying, "Is this what you mean?" It is this creative response in listening that enables the listener by sympathy to match in his mind what he hears. The reader will project his own experience and learning on to his reading of the text. By this means he makes sense of what he reads. "My eye is not just a camera; it's a projector as well."[7] A text is like the colours around us. Objects are without colour in the dark. It is only what the objects reflect back from the light shining on them that gives them colour. In the same way the text surrenders its meaning by the light of thought we bring to it. Referring to the words of Scripture, Edmond Jabes says, "How can we read these blank words save with the

help of our own words."[8] "Every reader is a potential writer. He makes the book into his book. He rewrites it for himself."[9] "Learning only takes place when you teach something to yourself."[10] He translates the book into the language of his own experience and thought, a language with which the reader can think "in dialogue" with the text. "The goal...is to bring about an active and meaningful engagement between the interpreter and text, in such a way that the interpreter's own horizon is reshaped and enlarged."[11]

Having proposed that a creative response, like that of an artist, is necessary on the part of the reader, what then is the nature of that creative response? The journalist captures a moment in words. The journalist is a collector of impressions. On the other hand the artist or poet is not so much a collector as a participator. He or she is one who looks in order to participate, to find some identification with that which holds the attention. With an intensity of awareness the poet, like the visual artist, looks until there is a creative moment in the heart and mind. An invitation to a reflective awareness is recorded in the New Testament. "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field,...will he not much more clothe you...?"(Matthew 6.28-29) The word, καταμάθετε , which is translated

"consider", also means to learn thoroughly, to observe well, and to consider carefully.[12] With a consideration of the lilies of the field in their beauty the reader is invited to perceive God's providence. By a looking or imagining the heart can be moved. With such an engagement the perception can be extended. But for some the experience may be even more profoundly absorbing. The poet Rilke writes of "a perfect state of osmosis between inner experience and the world: 'through all beings stretches one space: World-inner-space. The birds silently fly right through us. O, I who wish to grow, I look outside, and trees grow inside me.'"[13]

9.3 **Purity of Heart**

With a parable how can the reader encounter the text so that there is a creative moment in the heart and mind? For some it will only happen at an unexpected moment or at the right time (καιρός). For others the disciplines of the heart may prepare a moment of creative enlightenment. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God"(Matthew 5.8) Purity of heart opens the understanding. About purity of heart there is a Chinese story. It is from the Chinese writer, Chuang Tzu. "Ch'ing,the chief carpenter, was carving wood into a stand for musical instruments. When finished the work appeared to those who saw it as though of supernatural execution; and the Prince of Lu asked him saying, 'What mystery is there in your art?' 'No mystery, Your Highness,' replied

Ch'ing. 'And yet there is something. When I am about to make such a stand, I guard against any diminution of my vital power. I first reduce my mind to absolute quiescence. Three days in this condition, and I become oblivious of any fame to be acquired. Seven days, and I become unconscious of my four limbs and my physical frame. Then with no thought of the Court present in my mind, my skill becomes concentrated, and all disturbing elements from without are gone. I enter some mountain forest; I search for a suitable tree. It contains the form required, which is afterwards elaborated. I see the stand in my mind's eye, and then set to work. Beyond that there is nothing. I bring my own native capacity into relation with that of the wood. What was suspected to be of supernatural execution in my own work was due solely to this."[14] From the story notice three ideas. (1) "With no thought of the Court present in my mind, my skill becomes concentrated, and all disturbing elements from without are gone." With the mind detached from the possibility of praise or reward, it concentrates only on the work in hand. Kierkegaard calls this purity of heart. "Purity of heart is to will one thing."[15] "The man who desires the Good for the sake of reward does not will one thing, but is doubleminded."[16] Avoiding a dissipation of energies, singlemindedness, such as is exemplified by the carpenter, concentrates the creative skill. Similarly for the creative enterprise of appropriation or understanding

there has to be an inner stillness, a reservoir of silence. (2) "It contains the form required, which is afterwards elaborated. I see the stand in my mind's eye, and then set to work." As the carpenter imagines the form that he is to fashion and then effects his carpentry, so in a similar way the reader of parables gives rein to his imagination and works his thoughts on the parables. In the parable "the image is not an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster; it is what I can, and must perforce, call a vortex, from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing."[17] (3) "I bring my own native capacity into relation with that of the wood." What does he mean by "native capacity"? He could mean that he brings his own innate rather than his acquired abilities to the task. In terms of reading a text it could mean that the reader brings not the literary critical theories he has learnt but his own personal response. Kierkegaard expresses it even more radically: "When you read God's word eruditely, with a dictionary &c. you are not reading God's word."[18]

In the Chinese story there is something of the childlike mind in the carpenter: the doing of something for its own sake, the purity of heart, the use of the imagination, and the bringing of the native ability to the task. It is about this concept of the child that needs to be considered next.

9.4 **The Child**

"Whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it."(Mark 10.15) "Unless you change and become(γένεσθε) like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven."(Matthew 18.3) Since parables are related to the Kingdom of Heaven, it would therefore seem that it is a prerequisite for a disciple of the Kingdom to be like a child. Is there some distinctive gift of the child that enables him or her to appropriate a parable? At least if the parable is a story, the child characteristically has the capacity to enjoy a story. But why is the story enjoyable to the child? Is it related to the child's capacity to fantasize? If this is the reason, then we shall need to explore this particular faculty. In Matthew's gospel there is reference to the imaginative games of children. "To what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.'"(Matthew 11.16-17) The imaginative games of children are rich with creative possibilities. It is in games that there is improvisation. About the importance of imaginative play or "as if", Ciardi, a poet, speaks about the poet, while imagining himself, in his speaking, to be a poet. "I must make illusions for you. I must make something happen, and it must be <u>as if</u> it is happening to you. Every <u>as if</u>

experience you try on is another way of seeing yourselves. I must lead you to feel as if you were a child, a lover, a murderer, a dancer, a coward. For only as you try on all possibilities vicariously can you come to know yourself. But you will be not able to try them on if I only tell you about...I must make you feel as if they were happening to you. And to do that I must play my games."[19] The poet is the creator of illusions; it is as if he makes them happen to us by his imaginative games. By identifying with the characters "we play", even if only in imagination, we discover something of ourselves.

The "child" comes to the parable not with the trappings of adult scholarship but eager for games of the imagination, and willing for improvisation. As it was with the children who "played the flute" and "wailed" the onlookers are being prompted to join in, and to "find themselves" in the games of the imagination.

9.5 **Learning the Song**

The child can learn the words, music and actions of a song. And without the sophistications of perception the child carries the song in his or her heart to sing it in a time of celebration. Elie Wiesel, referring to the Hasidic masters, writes: "Somewhere, a Master is singing, and we feel compelled to join him and learn his song."[20] Can we also say this for the parable? Somewhere, a Master is telling a parable, and we feel compelled to join him and learn the parable. Here we are referring to a

learning of the heart which does not require the mediation of understanding. "The words of the scholar are to be understood. The words of the Master are not to be understood. They are to be listened to as one listens to the wind in the trees and the sound of the river and the song of the bird. They will awaken something within the heart that is beyond all knowledge."[21] As the heart is awakened so life resonates to the words of the Master. The Hasidic story like the parable "is to be told not studied. It is to be lived not analysed."[22] Such is one who has become a child.

9.6 **The Fool**

There is something in common between the fool and the child. About the fool and the child Helen Luke writes: "The freedom of the fool and the child is never silly; it is sophia 'playing in the world'."[23] By their games the "fool" and the child can lead people to appropriate new ways of thinking. I am not referring to the fool in the sense of one who is perversely stupid and disordered in his thinking. I am thinking rather of the fool as in Shakespeare's King Lear. He is the one who dares to say to the King what others would shrink from expressing. "He is wise enough to realise the tragic blunder that Lear has made, and though he keeps reminding him of it he pitifully tries to hold the King's madness at bay with his jesting."[24] In Hans Christian Andersen's story of The Emperor's New Clothes it is the child, like the fool, who

recognises the situation as it is; he is not conditioned by the fawning insincerity of the Emperor's courtiers. "'But he has nothing on!' a little child cried out at last. 'Just hear what that innocent says!' said the father."[25] The child in the story reminds us of the naive reader; he has no assumptions to prejudice his seeing.

The fool and the child are both aliens to convention. The word idiot, which has something of the same meaning as fool in the English language, is derived from the Greek word ἰδιώτης, meaning a private person, one without professional knowledge, unskilled, uneducated, unlearned.[26] The idiot or fool is one who is withdrawn from the cultural norms of society. Both the child and the fool can sometimes be profoundly disturbing since they challenge conventions. While this primitive simplicity can be a social impoverishment it can also be a peculiar advantage. Paradoxically the fool can have the perceptiveness of the wise man. Since the wise man is not likely to be absorbed into the unthinking and uncritical mass of the crowd, he can be a private and lonely person, an ἰδιώτης in the Greek sense. The wise fool is one who from his perspective can see the foolishness of the unthinking members of the crowd. "It requires a wise person to be a fool."

There are stories told by Sufis that, like parables, subvert and challenge the reader. In this tradition the Mulla Nasrudin is the character who frequently plays the

part of the fool. "Someone saw Nasrudin searching for something on the ground. 'What have you lost Mulla?' he asked. 'My key,' said the Mulla. So they both went down on their knees and looked for it. After a time the other man asked: 'Where exactly did you drop it?'

'In my own house.'

'Then why are you looking here?'

'There is more light than in my own house.'"[27]

Let us supppose that the reader of this story is one who is concerned to find the "key" to enlightenment and wisdom in unfamiliar surroundings since, as the proverb says, "The grass always grows greener next door." He might say, "What an idiotic story!" In one sense surely he is right. But in recognizing the foolishness of Nasrudin, he could be identifying the unrecognized foolishness in himself because he is in fact doing the same as Nasrudin, namely, looking in the wrong place. The obvious place to look for the key is in his "own house". Nasrudin perversely insists on searching for the key where "the light is better". By drawing upon himself the ridicule of the reader Nasrudin could be gently reminding the reader that the obvious place to search for the key is in the familiar surroundings where he lost it. Thus the foolishness of Nasrudin could lead to a new insight for the reader. Through the joke the reader may perceive his own foolishness. There is a suggestion of this idea of wisdom through foolishness in one of Saint Paul's letters.

"If you think that you are wise in this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise."(I Corinthians 3.18) Of this wisdom through foolishness there is a quotation at the beginning of the The Exploits of the Incomparable Mulla Nasrudin. "Mulla Nasrudin, Chief of the Dervishes and Master of a hidden treasure, a perfected man...Many say: I wanted to learn, but here I have found only madness. Yet, should they seek deep wisdom elsewhere, they may not find it."[28] The purpose of these Sufi stories seems to be the same as the mashal or parable, that is, "compelling the hearer or reader to form a judgment on himself, his situation or his conduct."[29] Thus the eye of the heart becomes enlightened.

Notes

1. J. Armitage Robinson, Epistle to the Ephesians (London: Macmillan, 1922) footnote 1, p.39.

2. J. Armitage Robinson, ibid., p.39.

3. G. Kittel (Editor), "καρδία", Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Translator and Editor Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Volume III, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1974) p.606.

4. Kittel, ibid., p.612.

5. Kurt Mueller-Vollmer (Editor), "Foundations: General Theory and Art of Interpretation", The Hermeneutics Reader, (Oxford: Blackwells, 1986) p.73.

6. John Dewey, Art as Experience (New York: Capricorn Books, 1958) p.54. Quoted in Wolfgang Iser, The Implied Reader. Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974) p.288

7. Murray Cox, "The Patient Speaks", Structuring the Therapeutic Process: Compromise with Chaos (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1978) p.229.

8. Geoffrey Hartman and Sanford Budick (Editors), "The Key" Midrash and Literature (Yale University Press, 1986) p.350.

9. Hartman and Budick, ibid., p.357.

10. Anthony de Mello, "Receptivity", One Minute Wisdom (Anand, India: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1985) p.69.

11. Anthony C. Thiselton, The Two Horizons (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1980) p.xix.

12. G.Abbott-Smith, "καταμανθάνω", Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament, Third Edition (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1937) p.236.

13. R.M.Rilke, Samtliche Werke, volumes I and II (Frankfurt: Insel, 1957) Quoted in Cox and Theilgaard, Mutative Metaphors in Psychotherapy op.cit., p.243

14. Aldous Huxley, The Perennial Philosophy (London: Fontana Books, Collins, 1963) pp.178-179.

15. Kierkegaard, Purity of Heart (Glasgow: Fontana Books, Collins, 1961) p.47

16. Kierkegaard, ibid., p.61.

17. Ezra Pound, Gaudier-Brzeska, A Memoir, p.106. Quoted in John Dominic Crossan, In Parables (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1973) p.xviii.

18. Thomas Oden (Editor), The Parables of Kierkegaard (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978) p.80.

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20. Elie Wiesel, Souls on Fire and Somewhere a Master (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984) p.363.

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Chapter 10

TOWARDS WHOLENESS

10.1 Disturbance Leading to a Change of Heart

"It is through symbols that man finds his way out of his particular situation and 'opens himself' to the general and universal. Symbols awaken individual experience."[1] "A symbol remains a perpetual challenge to our thoughts and feelings. That probably explains why a symbolic work is so stimulating, why it grips us so intensely, but also why it seldom affords us a purely aesthetic enjoyment."[2] The symbolic writing of a parable may open a person's mind, but more than this it can challenge accepted values as Herbert says. In the parable of the Prodigal Son(Luke 15.11-32) we notice how the story prompts a range of differing and disturbing responses from the reader. "The younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country."(v.13) The reader can identify with this from his own personal need for independence from his parents. "There he squandered his property in dissolute living."(v.13) Now the reader is presented with the dark side of the younger son. It is very likely that the reader may fail to recognise such a possibility in himself. Or perhaps it is what he has imagined but never dared to fulfil. Or it could describe what has been true of his own life. The story continues:

"He came to himself"(v.17) The reader can now identify with the recovery of identity after uncontrolled indulgence. "I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands."(v.19) The son hopes to win favour by his supplication, but his expectation is not realized as he might have expected. The father takes an initiative: "While he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him."(v.20) The son does not win his reinstatement by a plea but is received by the grace of the father. Those who think that they are the masters of their own destiny could be disturbed by this notion of grace. The older brother retorts: "For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!"(v.29-30) Many a dutiful son or daughter could sympathize. Is there not some injustice here? But the father makes no apology: "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours."(v.31) The elder son, although he takes it for granted, is already living within the providence of the father. Neither the younger son nor the elder brother can earn favour from the father in quite the way that they expect. The younger son finds himself as the undeserving

recipient of the father's grace; the elder brother is blind to the continuing providence of his father. In their different ways they both have to learn that the generosity of the father is freely given and not to be managed.

As the reader of this parable I am offered an opportunity to empathize or reject. Dominic Crossan proposes that parables do not merely give the reader opportunities to reflect but "parables give God room".[3] The grace and wisdom of God can become active in the particularities of the reader's life. But the parable of the Prodigal Son disturbs assumptions about grace. Since grace cannot be manipulated a change of assumptions is necessary. Parables "are meant to change not reassure us."[4] They "are stories which shatter the deep structure of our accepted world...They remove our defences and make us vulnerable to God."[5] This could be the first step towards a change of heart or repentance(μετάνοια). Could it be that the parable's function is to subvert and release a person from inadequate, settled patterns of thought so that he discovers an ignorance and uncertainty? Then from this change can come the possibility of reassessment and a new understanding about the grace of God.

10.2 **Towards Integration**

Northrop Frye recognizes an affinity between The Book of Job and the parables of Jesus. "The fable is not very

prominent in the Old Testament, except that The Book of Job is an enormous expansion of one, but it comes into its own, as the vehicle of instruction, in the parables of Jesus."[6] In the Book of Job, Elihu in a reproving tone says, "God speaks in one way and in two, though people do not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon mortals...then he opens their ears, and terrifies them with warnings, that he may turn them aside from their deeds, and keep them from pride." (Job 33.14-17) God seeks to complete the perception of reluctant mankind. And towards the end of The Book of Job, after debating with his detractors on the human condition, Job admits to God the incompleteness of his perception. "Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you declare to me. I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes."(Job 42.3-6) As in the drama of Job, it is the function of the parable to extend the frontiers of understanding and knowledge by confronting the reader with the mysteries and dilemmas of the human predicament. Not only does Job engage in dialogue with his detractors but also there are questions and answers to and from God. "Hear and I(Job) will speak; I will question you, and you declare to me." (Job 42.4) "I(God) will question you, and you shall declare to

me."(Job 38.3) Could this be a model for a reader's response to a parable? Thus there can be a questioning and answering in the privacy of his own mind. It is to be noticed that after the parable of The Good Samaritan Jesus asks a question requiring discernment about neighbourliness. "Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" The lawyer answers: "The one who showed him mercy."(Luke 10.36-37) By answering Jesus the lawyer answers his own original question, "Who is my neighbour?" Questioning in this parable becomes a way towards understanding.

But it is not only the understanding that is informed; the parable opens a door to the inner world of the heart, the source of thinking and feeling. As has been noted already, "The one thing man is afraid of is within himself, and the one thing he craves is within himself."[7] Could it be the "shadow" within of which he is afraid? Jung briefly defines the shadow as "'the thing a person has no wish to be.'[8]...the sum of all the unpleasant qualities one wants to hide, the inferior, worthless and primitive side of man's nature, the 'other person' in one, one's own dark side."[9] Jung explains further.

> Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is. If an inferiority is conscious, one always has a chance to correct it. Furthermore, it is constantly in contact with other interests, so that it is continually

> subjected to modifications. But if it is repressed and isolated from consciousness, it never gets corrected, and is liable to burst forth suddenly in a moment of unawareness. At all counts, it forms an unconscious snag, thwarting our most well-meant intentions.[10]

This "unconscious snag, thwarting our most well-meant intentions" is reminiscent of Saint Paul's writing: "For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do."(Romans 7.19) The unrecognized "shadow" destroys the integrity and health of the human soul. The parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector shows how the "shadow" can be projected, in this case by the Pharisee on to the Tax Collector, instead of being recognized as a latent possibility in the Pharisee himself. "God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector."(Luke 18.11) "Difficult emotions and unacceptable parts of the personality may be located in a person or object external to the subject."[11] "Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?"(Luke 7.42) In Mark's gospel there is a reminder of the degradation that comes from the workings of the "shadow". "It is what comes out of a person that defiles. For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly."(Mark 7.20-22) In the parables of the New Testament the shadow

appears in the profligate, unscrupulous, uncaring and unmerciful. Here are examples. The Prodigal Son: "This son of yours...has devoured your property with prostitutes." (Luke 15.30) The Dishonest Steward: "His master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly"(Luke 16.8) The Rich Man and Lazarus: "There was a rich man...who feasted sumptuously...A poor man named Lazarus...longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table."(Luke 16.19-20) The Two Debtors: "Out of pity for him, the lord...forgave him the debt. But that same slave...came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt."(Matthew 18.27-30) These are reminders of that side of human nature which we would rather hide. By recognizing and dealing with them they are redeemed from their undermining effects. "If an inferiority is conscious one always has a chance to correct it."[12] However, this is a demanding work and paradoxically Jung says: "The problem of accepting the shadow needs the simplicity of a child to submit to such a seemingly important task."[13]

If the reader is made aware of "his shadow" through the parables, how is he to find the way towards wholeness?

In man's search for wholeness "the unconscious offers...solutions for the difficulties of his own life, and in this way plays the role of religion."[14] To what can we turn as an example of the unconscious offering solutions?

10.3 **Active Imagination**

In his exploratory work on the human psyche C.G.Jung used a method which he called Active Imagination.

> You choose a dream, or some other fantasy-image, and concentrate on it by simply catching hold of it and looking at it. You can also use a bad mood as a starting point, and then try to find out what sort of fantasy-image it will produce, or what image expresses this mood. You then fix this image in the mind by concentrating your attention. Usually it will alter, as the mere fact of contemplating it animates it. The alterations must be carefully noted down all the time, for they reflect the psychic processes in the unconscious background, which appear in the form of images consisting of memory material, In this way conscious and unconscious are united, just as a waterfall connects above and below.[15]

In her biography of Jung, Barbara Hannah distinguishes between Jung's idea of active imagination and passive imagination.

> The whole of what he discovered at this time can be seen in the term "<u>active imagination</u>", because in it the ego plays an <u>active</u> role - it makes a conscious decision to drop down into the fantasy and then plays an active role in the subsequent development. Before Jung made this experiment in December 1913, he was just an observer of "<u>passive imagination</u>", that is, he watched fantasy after fantasy, as helpless to have any influence on it as the spectator in a cinema. But once he learned to take an active role in it himself, he found that he could have an influence on its development and that he was no longer a passive spectator at an unending

flood of fantasies.[16]

In a letter to Count Hermann Keyserling Jung suggests that questions can be put to the images in one's mind. "'Who or what has entered my psychic life and created disturbances and wants to be heard?' To this you should add: 'Let it speak!'"[17] "If you place yourself in the drama as you really are, not only does it gain in actuality but you also create, by your criticism of the fantasy, an effective counterpart to its tendencey to get out of hand. For what is now happening is the decisive rapprochement with the unconscious."[18]

> A very good example of active imagination is found in Matthew's Gospel in the story of the Temptations in the Wilderness. Jesus has gone into the wilderness to be alone after receiving the Holy Spirit from God and hearing the voice that proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Naturally, the first thing that would happen after such an experience is an inflation, a temptation to take the experience in the wrong way, and this temptation is presented in the voice of Satan, who says, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Jesus hears that voice within himself and answers it. The voice then speaks a second time, and a third, and each time Jesus hears the voice and replies to it. This is active imagination. Nor is this a way of saying that the Satan in the story is not real. Such a voice within us is <u>very</u> real, so real that unless we hear it, recognize it for what it is and respond to it, we will likely be taken over by it.[19]

Jung comments on the three temptations.

> Both sides appear here: the light side and the dark. The devil wants to tempt Jesus to proclaim himself master of the world. Jesus wants not to succumb to the temptation; then, thanks to the function that results from every conflict, a symbol appears: it is the idea of the Kingdom of God, a spiritual kingdom rather

> than a material one. Two things are united in this symbol, the spiritual attitude of Christ and the devilish desire for power. Thus the encounter of Christ with the devil is a classic example of the transcendent function...The conscious personality is brought face to face with the counter-position of the unconscious. The resulting conflict - thanks precisely to the transcendent function - leads to a symbol uniting the opposed positions.[20]

"Standing in compensatory relationship to both, the transcendent function enables thesis and antithesis to encounter one another on equal terms. That which is capable of uniting these two is a metaphorical statement (the symbol) which itself transcends time and conflict, neither adhering to nor partaking of one side or the other but somehow common to both and offering the possibility of a new synthesis."[21]

The baptismal and temptation experiences recorded of Jesus become parables for him. They compel him "to form a judgment on himself".[22] Jesus is confronted with the devil in the form of his "shadow". In giving recognition to the "shadow", that is in his temptations, Jesus is addressing and controlling these sinister influences. These experiences become for Jesus parables that shape his destiny. Likewise, when we read some parables they can possibly make us aware of our "shadow". So we are led painfully to grapple with what we hesitate to recognize in ourselves. Nevertheless, by the light of consciousness shining on sinister potentialities the "shadow" is redeemed and the soul is in the process of becoming

integrated. A means towards this wholeness is active imagination.

10.4 **Towards Wholeness**

Paul Ricoeur sees affinities between he miracles attributed to Jesus and the parables. "Miracles...are stories given as true stories. Parables are given as fictions. But what they mean is the same: the course of ordinary life is broken, the surprise bursts out."[23] What then can we learn about parables from the miracles?

In Mark's gospel the healing of a paralysed man(2.3-12) is followed some verses later by a parable. Concerning the healing it is recorded that Jesus said to the scribes: "'That you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins' - he said to the paralytic - 'I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home.' And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them."(2.10-12) A parable, a few verses later, reads: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."(Mark 2.17) Parallelism suggests that the well are the righteous and the sick are the sinners. The miracle and the parable throw light on each other. The parable enables us to identify Jesus as the physician in the healing miracle; he is the one who frees a sinner from sickness. The miracle shows that there is no release from sickness, in this case at least, without the forgiveness of sins. The resurrection from

paralysis is an analogy of the forgiveness of sins. Leslie Weatherhead comments on this miracle.

> The boys legs were paralysed and it is not fanciful to say that he could not "walk away" from his sins...Here we have a characteristic picture of what has been called conversion hysteria. That is to say, the conversion into physical terms of a mental state that has become intolerable...But Jesus broke up the complex by that authoritative assertion of forgiveness which seems to have seeped right through the conscious and reached the unconscious and determining part of the boy's mind.[24]

Both the miracle and the parable seem to understand sin more as a sickness which needs to be healed by a physician than punished by a judge. So the reader is invited to ponder on the mysterious analogy between release from paralysis and the forgiveness of sins. As K.J.T.Wright says, "Where symptom was there metaphor shall be."[25] Thus the symptom shows itself to be a metaphor of the condition of the soul. And release from paralysis becomes a metaphor of the forgiveness of sins.

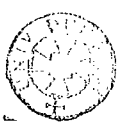
In the Fourth Gospel there are signs(σημεῖα), which are treated as having parabolic qualities. For example, after the healing of a blind man(John 9.1-7) there is a discourse which concludes with these words referring to Jesus: "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind."(John 9.39) Thus the healing of blindness becomes a parable concerning the mission of Jesus. With reference to parables Mark records a similar thought. "For those outside, everything comes in parables; in order that they

may indeed look but not perceive."(Mark 4.11-12) The healing miracle, or parable, addresses itself to those who think that they see or perceive but are in fact blind.

The miracles I have cited serve as parables. And the parable can serve to illuminate a miracle. Just as the miracles are concerned to heal or to make whole, the parables also attempt to activate the wholeness of the perception.

10.5 **Through Perception to Wholeness**

Wilshire writes about metaphor as a way to disclosure. "Characters enacted onstage are not verbal but physiognomic metaphors; we see and feel them to be like ourselves...The whole point of art is to put us in touch with things that are too far or too close for us to see in our ordinary offstage life."[26] The characters we see onstage communicate something to us not merely by their dialogue but by their visual presence. The art of the playwright is to put us in touch with feelings which are beyond our customary experience, or which are so much a part of our lives that we no longer recognize them. The art becomes a mirror in which we see ourselves. But more than this, art can sometimes effect a change of perspective. "Some of the most delicate moments in psychotherapy arise when the therapist responds to a patient's initiative which is already 'deep' by taking it to an even deeper level through the use of metaphor. If such an intervention has been correctly judged then the



metaphor will be mutative."[27] By "deeper level" I would assume that the authors mean that a person is being made aware of feelings which are deeply affective. "Metaphor,...when it induces change, is justly named 'mutative'"[28] Such could be the effect of the extended metaphor of the parable. It could induce a change of perception and repentance(μετάνοια). And being "sown on the good soil", it could "bear fruit".(Mark 4.12,20)

Accepting that the temptations of Jesus were for him parables by which he forged his destiny, what can we learn from this struggle? According to the Gospel records, it is apparent that Jesus' struggle is to find and obey the will of His heavenly Father? The Lord's Prayer reads: "Your will be done."(Matthew 6.10) In the Garden of Gethsemane it records that Jesus prayed: "Not what I want, but what you want."(Mark 14.36) If the purpose of the parables, like the temptations of Jesus, is to find the will of God, then, as Crossan writes, they "give God room". The reader of the parable can thus lay himself open to the eternal purpose of God.

It has already been suggested that one of the roles of a parable is perception. Consider the extended parable of the Book of Job. After the criticisms of Job's detractors and Job's wrestling with questions to and from God(Job.40.7;42.4), there are these words from Job: "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust

and ashes."(Job 42.5) The preoccupations with human suffering have slipped away. It is enough to "see" God. The parable cannot describe the mysteries of God, which are beyond human grasp, any more than the dialogues of Job can be ultimately satisfying. It is only a catalyst which may lead a person to the moment when he says: "I see and therefore I am made whole." "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God."(Matthew 5.8) Blessed are the undivided, singleminded, and whole in heart for they shall perceive something of the mystery which is God.

Notes

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Chapter 11

MODERN EXPONENTS OF THE PARABLE: KAFKA

11.1 **Franz Kafka (1883-1924)**

It is written of Kafka that he was a "German speaking Jewish novelist, born in Prague...Characteristic of Kafka's work is the portrayal of an enigmatic reality in which the individual is seen as lonely, perplexed, and threatened, and guilt is one of his major themes".[1] "To a circle of friends...his remembrance was deep-etched. His shy, riddling irony, the probing innocence of his speech and manner, had cast a spell...'Had one to name the author who comes nearest to bearing the same kind of relation to our age as Dante, Shakespeare and Goethe bore to theirs, Kafka is the first one would think of.'(W.H.Auden)"[2]

11.2 **Kafka: On Parables**

In a collection entitled Parables and Paradoxes by Kafka, the first passage is called On Parables. This puzzling piece of writing is helpfully discussed by Robert Funk. I am indebted to him for some of the thoughts that follow. On Parables reads as follows:

> Many complain that the words of the wise are always merely parables and of no use in daily life, which is the only life we have. When the sage says: "Go over," he does not mean that we should cross to some actual place, which we could do anyhow if the labour were worth it; he means some fabulous yonder, something unknown to us, something too that he cannot designate more precisely, and therefore cannot help us here in the very least. All these parables really set out to say merely that the incomprehensible is incomprehensible, and we know that already. But

> the cares we have to struggle with every day: that is a different matter.
>
> Concerning this a man once said: Why such reluctance? If you only followed the parables you yourselves would become parables and with that rid of all your daily cares.
>
> Another said: I bet that is also a parable.
>
> The first said: You have won.
>
> The second said: But unfortunately only in parable.
>
> The first said: No, in reality: in parable you have lost.[3]

"'Many complain', we are told,'that the words of the wise are merely parables and of no use in daily life.' The complaint itself represents a certain discernment. Those without complaint take the parables of the wise to have an ascertainable message translatable into non-parabolic language. The translation makes the parable applicable to everyday life...The complainers, on the other hand, have some premonition that the parables have to do with the incomprehensible and so cannot be of any practical use. Kafka obliges his readers to complain: he refuses any recognizable frame of reference for his work and thus compels interpreters to speculate."[4] Parables remain stubbornly enigmatic. They become the stimulant not of a set answer or of a practical solution to life's daily problems but rather the means by which after reflection the problem is opened up. But those who would translate or paraphrase them as applicable to everyday life are in some way taming the impact of the parables to the limits of their own personal understanding. By this means the enigmas are domesticated. On the other hand

Kafka is leading the reader to recognize the dilemmas and incomprehensible quality of some human predicaments. Men and women have to live with uncertainty. This is what it means to be human.

"When the sage says: 'Go over,' he does not mean that we should cross to some actual place, but to a fabulous yonder. The prosaic mind is not interested in fabulous places unless they are real places...This fabulous place, moreoever, is not here but 'yonder', i.e. in some strange and perhaps exotic land, 'away-from-here'...The parable speaks of a nowhere, located somewhere else, in language intrinsically inexact."[5] Robert Funk quotes from another parable, "Away-from-here". "'And so you know your destination?' he asked. 'Yes,' I answered, 'Didn't I say so? Away-From-Here, that is my destination.'"[6] To "go over" could be to travel "Away-From-Here" on one's parabolic journey. The parable is thus shown as an inducement to exploration.

"The cares we have to struggle with every day: that is a different matter." Like sheep daily munching their ration of grass some are tied to the exigencies of survival in the human situation. How can the fabulous yonder, unknown and imprecise, say anything about the unrelenting burden of daily cares?

"Concerning this a man once said: Why such reluctance? If you only followed the parables you yourselves would become parables, and with that rid of all

your daily cares." About this reluctance to become a parable, we make a choice. Either we encounter the parable and let it live its effect in us, that is we 'become a parable', or we think about it and thus control its effect and limit its meaning. It will be limited to the rational categories and cultural norms of the reader. To talk or write about a parable is to assess and 'stand outside' it. Literary critical disciplines do exactly this. Perhaps we can learn what it means to 'become a parable' if we consider the analogy of a one person's encounter with another. In the transformative relationship which Martin Buber names as I and Thou, "the relation to the Thou is <u>direct</u>. No system of ideas, no foreknowledge, and no fancy intervene between I and Thou. The memory itself is transformed, as it plunges out of its isolation into the unity of the whole. No aim, no lust, and no anticipation intervene between I and Thou. Desire itself is transformed as it plunges out of its dream into the appearance. Every means is an obstacle. Only when every means has collapsed does the meeting come about."[7] Does Martin Buber give us a model for a reader's relationship with a parable? Kathleen Raine describes in her autobiography an experience of identification which could be an analogy of the kind of experience that Kafka is suggesting when he writes about becoming a parable.

> All was stilled. I was looking at the hyacinth, and as I gazed at the form of its petals and the strength of their curve as they open and curl back to reveal the mysterious flower-centres

> with their anthers and eyelike hearts, abruptly I found that I was no longer looking <u>at</u> it, but <u>was</u> it...I and the plant were one and indistinguishable; as if the plant were a part of my consciousness. I dared scarcely to breath, held in a kind of fine attention in which I could sense the very flow of life in the cells. I was not perceiving the flower but living it.[8]

To quote Buber,"Every means," that is every theory or method, "is an obstacle. Only when every means has collapsed does the meeting between" the reader and the parable "come about". Then the reader has lost his readership and become a parable, no longer an observer but a participator. To reword a saying of Saint Paul: "It is no longer I who live , but it is 'the parable that' lives in me."(Galatians 2.20)

But what causes the reluctance? There is a parable of Kafka called The Watchman, which Robert Funk believes illuminates this problem. "I ran past the first watchman. Then I was horrified, ran back again and said to the watchman: 'I ran through here while you were looking the other way.' The watchman gazed ahead of him and said nothing. 'I suppose I really oughtn't to have done it,' I said. The watchman still said nothing. 'Does your silence indicate permission to pass?'"[9]. . . Robert Funk comments: "It is not enough that the way is open, that an invitation has been issued, that the watchman is unseeing. The literal mind insists on <u>explicit</u> permission to pass. The reluctance to become parables is linked to the lack of explicitness, to the imprecision with which the sage

speaks of that fabulous yonder. The parable has none of the allegorical transparency of Pilgrim's Progress; it is a poor road map for the traveller who has lost his way, particularly when the hour is late. To those who wish to place such demands on the parable, Kafka gives the recommendation to 'Give It Up!' in this paragraph discovered among his papers upon his death:

'It was very early in the morning, the streets clean and deserted. I was on my way to the railroad station. As I compared the tower clock with my watch I realized it was already much later than I had thought. I had to hurry. The shock of this discovery made me feel uncertain of the way. I was not very well acquainted with the town as yet. Fortunately there was a policeman nearby. I ran to him and breathlessly asked him the way. He smiled and said: "From me you want to learn the way?" "Yes," I said, "since I cannot find it myself." "Give it up, give it up", said he, and turned away with a great sweep, like someone who wants to be alone with his laughter.'"[10] If the parable is expected to be a map, showing the way, the reader will be disappointed. He either follows and becomes a parable, or it is better, according to Kafka, to "give it up". To be one who follows parables is to be a pilgrim but not to know the destination.

"Another said: I bet that is also a parable."

Robert Funk comments:

> Rather than accepting or rejecting the invitation (that is to become a parable), this

> participant prefers to indulge in a game of definition...This manoeuvre is designed to forestall the issue. It holds the question at arm's length while pretending to address it...the definition or identification of the parable as parable is of no immediate or ultimate help...It is crushing to discover that identification is a form of not-knowing, that recognition is the final refusal. The parable must be seized as parable or not at all. The parable cannot be reduced to other terms, not even when it is identified as parable.[11]

It seems paradoxical that "identification is a form of not-knowing," and "that recognition is the final refusal." But for Kafka parables are essentially not material for assessment, identification or recognition. They cannot be appropriated by the intellect alone. It is like the Sufi tradition which tells of two kinds of truth. There is apparent truth, which can be told, acquired and discussed. There is inner truth which cannot be told but only discovered by those who are attuned to it.[12] It is not available for discussion since it is only perceived subjectively. Furthermore consider how the telling of a joke depends for its success on the hearer's sense of humour. If it has to be explained, it has failed in its purpose. The identification and recognition of the joke's purpose or meaning is an irrelevance; such an intellectual grasp only shows that it has failed to elicit the laughter which is the only appropriate expression of sympathetic understanding. The whole point of a joke is to test the hearer's sense of humour, not to test his analytical assessment or recognition of the type of joke.

Jokes require participation not analysis. So it is with the parable, explanation would dissipate what the teller hopes to elicit, namely the inner subjective response. Consider the immediacy with which a child listens to a story; it is open and vulnerable to its influence. For Kafka parables are similar. They need to be seized directly.

"The first said: You have won." You have made the correct definition. However, a parable requires a response of another kind. "To have won in reality is to remain bound to the everyday world, to daily cares, to be unable to heed the invitation to 'go over'; it also means to be imprisoned in the literal."[13] It is as if there are two different realities: the reality of the literal everyday world and the reality of a parable.

"The second said: But unfortunately only in parable." The two speakers have different experiences of reality: the one of the everyday and the other of the parabolic. It is like blind and deaf persons; they experience realities the other cannot affirm. "Unfortunately only in parable" implies that the parable is an insignificant kind of reality and the everyday is a more significant reality. His literal mind can only identify a parable; he cannot follow and become a parable. The literal mind has to remain a spectator to the parabolic kind of living. Such a mind is nourished with facts rather than metaphors.

"The first said: No, in reality: in parable you have lost." In your category of reality, the reality of the every day, you have been successful; you have recognized and identified a parable. But in the business of becoming a parable, you have lost. You have not learned to "go over" to the parabolic experience. Like a child, you have yet to learn to "play the parable".

11.3 **Before the Law**

In this collection of parables there is one from The Trial entitled "Before the Law". It reads as follows:

> Before the Law stands a doorkeeper on guard. To this doorkeeper there comes a man from the country who begs for admittance to the Law. But the doorkeeper says that he cannot admit the man at the moment. The man, on reflection, asks if he will be allowed, then, to enter later. "It is possible," answers the doorkeeper, "but not at this moment." Since the door leading into the Law stands open as usual and the doorkeeper steps to one side, the man bends down to peer through the entrance. When the doorkeeper sees that, he laughs and says: "If you are so strongly tempted, try to get in without my permission. But note that I am powerful. And I am only the lowest doorkeeper. From hall to hall keepers stand at every door, one more powerful than the other. Even the third of these has an aspect that even I cannot bear to look at." These are difficulties which the man from the country has not expected to meet. The Law, he thinks, should be accessible to every man and at all times, but when he looks more closely at the doorkeeper in his furred robe, with his huge pointed nose and long, thin, Tartar beard, he decides that he had better wait until he gets permission to enter. The doorkeeper gives him a stool and lets him sit down at the side of the door. There he sits waiting for days and years. He makes many attempts to be allowed in and wearies the doorkeeper with his importunity. The doorkeeper often engages him in brief conversation, asking him about his home and about other matters, but the questions are put quite impersonally, as

> great men put questions, and always conclude with the statement that the man cannot be allowed to enter yet. The man, who has equipped himself with many things for his journey, parts with all he has, however valuable, in the hope of bribing the doorkeeper. The doorkeeper accepts it all, saying, however, as he takes each gift: "I take this only to keep you from feeling that you have left something undone." During all these long years the man watches the doorkeeper almost incessantly. He forgets about the other doorkeepers, and this one seems to him the only barrier between himself and the Law. In the first years he curses his evil fate aloud; later, as he grows old, he only mutters to himself. He grows childish, and since in his prolonged watch he has learned to know even the fleas in the doorkeeper's fur collar, he begs the very fleas to help him and to persuade the doorkeeper to change his mind. Finally his eyes grow dim and he does not know whether the world is really darkening around him, or whether his eyes are only deceiving him. But in the darkness he can now perceive a radiance that streams immortally from the door of the Law. Now his life is drawing to a close. Before he dies, all that he has experienced during the whole time of his sojourn condenses in his mind into one question, which he has never yet put to the doorkeeper. He beckons the doorkeeper, since he can no longer raise his stiffening body. The doorkeeper has to bend far down to hear him, for the difference in size between them has increased very much to the man's disadvantage. "What do you want to know now?" asks the doorkeeper, "you are insatiable". "Everyone strives to attain the Law," answers the man, "how does it come about, then, that in all these years no one has come seeking admittance but me?" The doorkeeper perceives that the man is at the end of his strength and that his hearing is failing, so he bellows in his ear: "No one but you could gain admittance through this door, since this door was intended only for you. I am now going to shut it."[14]

There is an entry in Kafka's diary of the 4th December 1913 that is reminiscent of the man in the parable. "The fear of folly. To see folly in every emotion that strives straight ahead and makes one forget

everything else. What then is non-folly? Non-folly is to stand like a beggar before the threshold to one side of the entrance, to rot and collapse."[15] Folly would be to attempt to pass the powerful doorkeepers. Throughout the parable he shows the "non-folly which stands like a beggar." "He makes many attempts to be allowed in and wearies the doorkeeper with his importunity." "The man...parts with all he has...in the hope of bribing the doorkeeper." "How does it come about, then, that no one has come seeking admittance but me?" The words "attempts", "hope" and "seeking" do not suggest the folly "that strives straight ahead and makes one forget everything else." But why should there be this lack of daring folly? "During all these long years the man watches the doorkeeper almost incessantly." In his waiting does he lose the possibility of a bold initiative? There is perhaps within the human soul that which frustrates initiative. Another parable in the collection exemplifies a kind of daring folly. "Leopards break into the temple and drink to the dregs what is in the sacrificial pitchers; this is repeated over and over again; finally it can be calculated in advance, and it becomes a part of the ceremony."[16] The leopards are an archetypal symbol of daring and the kind of folly "that strives straight ahead and makes one forget everything else." In another parable called The Watchman there is an example of what Kafka calls non-folly, that is hesitation

to pass the threshold. "I ran past the first watchman. Then I was horrified, ran back again and said to the watchman: 'I ran through here while you were looking the other way.' The watchman gazed ahead of him and said nothing. 'I suppose I really oughtn't to have done it,' I said. The watchman still said nothing. 'Does your silence indicate permission to pass?'"...[17] The cause of the hesitation is in the mind of the person not in the prohibition of the watchman. While it is true that the doorkeeper, unlike the watchman, speaks to the man before the law as one who advises, nevertheless he has something in common with the watchman. They are both authority figures about whom there are feelings of respect and caution. But at the same time neither of them in fact prohibits. Therefore are they both to be understood rather as a pretext than as a necessary cause for caution? The doorkeeper would seem to be a fiction that embodies the pretext in order to avoid an awesome encounter with the immortal radiance?

Bearing in mind that Kafka was a Jew, what are we to understand about the significance of the Law for him? About the Law, it records in the book of the prophet Jeremiah, 31.33-34: "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or

say to each other, 'Know the Lord', for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest." To have the Law of God in the heart is to belong to God. To have the Law is to have knowledge of God.

For those who are trained in psychological understanding it could be seductive to recognize and identify psychological categories in the parable, "Before the Law". It would be an attractive procedure since by this means the reader could master what is after all a very enigmatic piece of writing. The symbolism of the parable is powerfully evocative with mental images. By taking into account Jeremiah's understanding of the Law, we could propose that the door of the law is the way into the man's heart. In the heart can be found not only the law of God but a knowledge of God Himself. Also one could say that the man has a fear of being confronted with the deep recesses of his own heart or unconscious; he fears the encounter between what he knows of himself (the ego) and his largely unknown and mysterious inner centre (the self). However, to bring the thoughts and insights of psychology to this parable is to invalidate what Kafka himself writes about response to parables. "If you only followed the parables you yourselves would become parables." To make a psychological assessment of a parable is not to become a parable but intellectually to distance oneself from it. He writes of a folly "that strives straight ahead and makes one forget everything

else." This is the foolishness of a daring that comes empty-handed, with single-minded intention.

11.4 **Comments on "Before the Law"**

In the story of The Trial, from which the parable is taken, there is a discussion about the parable between a priest and K. "'Don't be too hasty', said the priest, 'don't take over an opinion without testing it. I have told you the story in the very words of the scriptures. There is no mention of delusion in it.'"[18] Particular respect must therefore be paid to the very wording so that the hearer's opinion is governed by the limits of meaning set by the story. The priest proposes a paradox. "'The right perception of any matter and a misunderstanding of the same matter do not wholly exclude each other.'"[19] Does Kafka mean that a perception can be correct in one context but inadequate in a different context? For example, we can say correctly that a colour is blue, and yet in relation to a variety of blues it can be more correctly named navy blue as distinct from ultramarine. From one point of view, to call it blue is correct and yet at the same time this description is inadequate. If this is what Kafka means, then there would seem to be differing levels of perception which do not necessarily exclude each. "'Don't misunderstand me,' said the priest, 'I am only showing you the various opinions concerning that point. You must not pay too much attention to them. The scriptures are unalterable and the comments often enough

merely express the commentator's bewilderment.'"[20] The parable remains intractable. It is the reader who is the problematic element in appropriating its meaning.

11.5 **A Viewpoint: Hermann Hesse**

About the enigmatic quality of Kafka's stories, which do not easily lend themselves to the procedures of interpretation, Hermann Hesse understands the need for Kafka to be treated as a poet.

> Kafka's stories are not treatises about religious, metaphysical, or moral problems but works of the imagination. Whoever is capable of really reading a poet, that is, without questioning, without expecting intellectual or moral rewards, but in simple readiness to accept what the poet gives, to him these works in their own language give every answer that the reader can possibly wish. Kafka has nothing to say to us either as a theologian or as a philosopher but simply as a poet. That his magnificent stories have today become the fashion, that they are read by people who are neither able nor willing to assimilate poetry, for this he is not to blame....He gives us the dreams and visions of his lonesome, difficult life, parables of his experiences, his distresses and moments of happiness; these dreams and visions alone are what we have to look for in him and receive from him, not the "interpretations" that ingenious exegetes can give to these creations. This business of "interpretation" is an intellectual game, a pretty enough game, suitable for people who are smart but who are strangers to art, who can read and write books about Negro sculpture or the twelve-tone scale but never find their way to the inside of a work of art because they stand at the gate fiddling at it with a hundred keys and never notice that the gate, in fact, is open.[21]

Notes

1. Margaret Drabble (Editor), Oxford Companion to English Literature, Fifth Edition (Oxford: O.U.P., 1985) p.524.

2 George Steiner, Language and Silence (New York: Atheneum, 1986) p.118.

3. Franz Kafka, Parables and Paradoxes (New York: Schocken Books, 1975) p.11.

4. Robert Funk, "Jesus and Kafka", Jesus as Precursor, (Philadelphia: Fortress press and Scholars Press, 1975) p.2

5. Funk, ibid., p.2.

6. Kafka, "My Destination", Parables and Paradoxes, op.cit., p.189.

7. Martin Buber, I and Thou. Translated by Ronald Gregor Smith, Second Edition (Edinburgh: T & T. Clark, 1958) pp.12-13.

8. Kathleen Raine, The Land Unknown (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1975) p.119.

9. Kafka, "The Watchman" Parables and Paradoxes op.cit., p.81.

10. Franz Kafka, "Give it Up!" The Collected Short Stories of Franz Kafka, Edited by Nahum H. Glatzer (London: Penguin, 1988) p.456.

11. Funk, op.cit., pp.3-4.

12. Idries Shah, The Exploits of the Incomparable Mulla Nasrudin (London: Picador, Pan Books, 1973) p.23.

13. Funk, op.cit., p.4.

14. Kafka, "Before the Law" Parables and Paradoxes, op.cit., p.61.

15. Franz Kafka, The Diaries of Franz Kafka, Edited by Max Brod (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975) p.244.

16. Kafka, "Leopards in the Temple" Parables and Paradoxes, op.cit., p.93.

17. Kafka, "The Watchman", ibid., p.81.

18. Kafka, "Before the Law", ibid., p.65.

19. Kafka, "Before the Law", ibid., p.69.

20. Kafka, "Before the Law", ibid., p.71.

21. Hermann Hesse, "Interpreting Kafka" My Belief (London: Triad/Paladin, Grafton Books, 1956) pp.281-282.

Chapter 12

MODERN EXPONENTS OF THE PARABLE: BORGES

12.1 Jorge Luis Borges

Jorge Luis Borges, the Argentinian writer, was born in Buenos Aires in 1899. He died in 1986. He was educated in Europe. He became a master of parabolic writing.

Giovanna de Garayalde writes: "For Borges, the main objective of art is to help the reader to accomplish his own art, which is to know his own self and the world, in other words to know his real role in the economy of the world...By bringing him face to face with transcendental problems he tries to confuse him, to get him out of thinking in rigid patterns, to destroy his primitive beliefs, to make him doubt his own mental powers and to face him constantly with a world full of irrational elements and aspects of reality that can be known intuitively but which cannot be explained."[1]

12.2 Borges on Himself

In his understanding of himself he can recognize two personalities. "I have been made keenly aware of the fact that there are two, because when I think of myself, I think, let us say, of a rather secret, of a rather hesitant, groping man. Somehow, this can hardly be reconciled to the fact that I seem to be giving lectures all the time and travelling all over the world."[2] In a

parable entitled "Borges and I" he writes that the "I" oversees the one whom he calls Borges: "I live, let myself go on living, so that Borges may contrive his literature...I shall remain in Borges, not in myself (if it is true that I am someone)."[3] The anonymous "I" finds an identity in "Borges". All is surrendered to "Borges". The "I" itself cannot be fathomed. "Thus my life is a flight and I lose everything and everything belongs to oblivion, or to him (that is Borges)."[4] The one he calls "I", as distinct from "Borges", is described mysteriously: "Time is a river that sweeps me along, but I am the river."[5] Time and "I" are inseparable. The "I" could not exist without time. It is like the astronomers who say that the universe and time are coexistent. What he calls "Borges" would seem to be a parable of the mysterious "I".

In what Borges calls the "I" there is a reminder of what C.G.Jung writes about the self: "There is little hope of our ever being able to reach even approximate consciousness of the self, since however much we may make conscious there will always exist an indeterminate and indeterminable amount of unconscious material which belongs to the totality of the self."[6] As distinct from the "I", "Borges" would seem to have some affinities with what Jung calls the ego. "The ego is concerned with such matters as personal identity, maintenance of the personality, continuity over time, mediation between conscious and unconscious realms, cognition and reality

testing, it also has to be seen as responsive to the demands of something superior. This is the self, the ordering principle of the entire personality. The relation of the self to the ego is compared to that of 'the mover to the moved'"[7] About the soul Jung writes: "If the human soul is anything, it must be of unimaginable complexity and diversity...I can only gaze with wonder and awe at the depths and heights of our psychic nature. Its non-spatial universe conceals an untold abundance of images which have accumulated over millions of years of living development and become fixed in the organism."[8] The self, or "I" as Borges calls it, is an immeasurably complex entity, the product of hereditary and environmental influences, recapitulating the whole history of mental evolution and sharing some archetypal symbols with all mankind of all ages. Borges understands the author as being like the self. The author is not simply one who expresses individual creativity but rather someone who is the product of innumerable influences. He is the end product of countless interactions, one author feeding on the thoughts of another in a continuous chain. It is like the natural world where life feeds on life.

12.3 "All Authors are One"

It is not only the individual author who is a complex entity, but the author is also part of a universal complex of which he or she partakes. "'All authors are one,' (Borges) writes...This impersonal, ecumenical quality of

(Borges) writes...This impersonal, ecumenical quality of literature is, he adds, 'another witness of the profound unity of the Word.'"[9] Borges's works have been well characterized as "a literature of literature and thought."[10] For Borges the words, metaphors, and ideas of authors have been passed on by their fellow authors; they are the shared language of the human soul. Just as a single word is the merest grain of thought and has little meaning until it is combined with other words, so by analogy authors are those who combine the thoughts of many authors to create meaning. There could be a kind of theoretical unity of thought, what Borges calls "the profound unity of the Word". From this "universal language" the author gains his inspiration and reaffirms that "All authors are one". Borges tells about the unity of authorship in a strange piece of fiction called "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote."[11] Borges tells how Pierre Menard

> did not want to compose another Quixote - which is easy - but the Quixote itself. Needless to say, he never contemplated a mechanical transcription of the original; he did not propose to copy it. His admirable intention was to produce a few pages which would coincide - word for word and line for line - with those of Miguel de Cervantes...To be, in some way, Cervantes and reach the Quixote seemed less arduous to him, - and, consequently, less interesting - than to go on being Pierre Menard and reach the Quixote through the experiences of Pierre Menard.[12]

By thus recreating the work of another author, it is as if there is a kind of "universal soul" in which the writer

can partake.

12.4 **The Parables**

(i) Inferno I,32[13]

At the end of the book by Borges,entitled Labyrinths,[14]there are eight parables. The first is a reflection on words from The Divine Comedy by Dante:

> And see, not far from where the mountain-side
> First rose, a Leopard, nimble and light and fleet,
> Clothed in a fine furred pelt all dapple-dyed,
>
> Came gambolling out, and skipped before my feet,
> Hindering me so, that from the forthright line
> Time and again I turned to beat retreat.[15]

In the parable Dante gives significance to the leopard in the Divine Comedy. In a similar way God gives significance to Dante's life. Dante yearns for the crown of meaning. In the evanescence of a dream he receives that meaning. "In a dream, God declared to him the secret purpose of his life and work; Dante, in wonderment, knew at last who and what he was and blessed the bitterness of his life. Tradition relates that, upon waking, he felt that he had received and lost an infinite thing, something he would not be able to recuperate or even glimpse, for the machinery of the world is much too complex for the simplicity of men."[16] However complex man's world is the understanding of his destiny is received in a moment of intuitive simplicity. "Any life no matter how long or complex it may be is made up essentially of a single moment - the moment in which a man finds out once for all,

who he is."[17] Garayalde comments: "Borges is trying...to familiarize us with intuition, a kind of knowledge that man no longer takes into account and which he has completely forgotten. Much criticism of the destructiveness of the author's writings is based on the fact that he plunges his characters into a world of chaos and chance, but this happens only when they search obsessively for the meaning of life through their own reasoning or in books."[18] Despite the breadth of his own learning Borges is leading his readers to find perception through the "simplicity" of intuition.

(ii) Paradiso XXXI,108[19]

This parable reflects on the tradition concerning Veronica at the time of Jesus' passion. The cloth with which she wiped his face received an imprint. About this Borges asks in the words of Dante: "My Lord, Jesus Christ, true God, and was this, then, the fashion of thy semblance?" If we knew what the Holy Face of God was like, "the key to all parables would be ours."[20] To what does knowing the face of God refer? In the Old Testament tradition Jacob is reported as saying: "I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved."(Genesis 32.30) In the Book of Numbers(12.6-7) there is a distinction made between Moses and other prophets. "When there are prophets among you, I the Lord make myself known to them in visions. I speak to them in dreams. Not so with my servant Moses; he is entrusted with all my house.

With him I speak face to face - clearly, not in riddles; and he beholds the form of the Lord."[21] There seems to be a distinction between the vision or the dream of a prophet and seeing the form of the Lord as is recorded of Moses. Perhaps it means that some will have to be content with the parabolic character of visions and dreams while the chosen few, like Jacob and Moses, will find "the key to all parables" through an immediacy of "seeing".

If God has put the image of His own likeness into mankind whom he has created, then we may discern something of the face of God in our fellow human beings. Towards the end of the parable there are these words: "Perhaps some feature of that crucified countenance lurks in every mirror; perhaps the face died, was obliterated, so that God could be all of us. Who knows whether tonight we shall not see it in the labyrinths of our dreams and not even know it tomorrow."[22]

(iii) Ragnarok[23]

This is the title of "a Scandinavian myth telling of the death of the gods."[24] Borges tells a dream. The gods made in the image of man, subdued for centuries by Islam and the Roman Catholic Church, and comfortably dressed with the appetites of humanity, make an appearance. They are shown up for what they are. Since they could destroy man the gods are joyfully killed.

(iv) Parable of Cervantes and the Quixote[25]

This is about a dreamer, a country gentleman of La

Mancha, and a dreamed one, the knight errant, Don Quixote of La Mancha. "For both of them, for the dreamer and the dreamed one, the whole scheme of the work consisted in the opposition of two worlds: the unreal world of the books of chivalry, the ordinary everyday world of the seventeenth century. They did not suspect that the years would finally smooth away that discord...For in the beginning of literature is the myth, and in the end as well."[26] The dreamed myth of Don Quixote has become more real to subsequent generations than the realities of the everyday world of the seventeenth century. What began as a mythical dream-fantasy has become a powerful, mythical reality to the modern reader. We remember the world of Don Quixote more than the seventeenth century world from which he was trying to escape. The "dream" has become a "reality".

(v) The Witness[27]

People can be witnesses to experiences peculiar to themselves. Borges tells of a Saxon, living in Christian times. He had been a worshipper of Woden. With his death would die the last images of pagan rites. Concerning every death, Borges asks what images may die with that person.

(vi) A Problem[28]

A fragment of the Quixote is found. Don Quixote has killed a man. At that point the fragment ends. The problem is to conjecture how Don Quixote would react in

this given circumstance.

(a) Nothing happens. It is an hallucination.

(b) He wakens from his pampered madness.

(c) He cannot admit that his act is a product of delirium. The reality of the effect makes him presuppose a parallel cause. Don Quixote will never emerge from his madness.

(d) As in Indian philosophy all sensory experience is illusory.

The third conjecture (c) is proposed as the most plausible. Since he cannot admit his delirium he cannot be freed from his madness. For personal freedom he needs to bear the pain of responsibility. Can he admit to killing another in the fantasy of delirium? Can he be motivated to desperate acts by powerful fictions and thus act in ignorance?

The first conjecture (a) sees Don Quixote as indulging in fictions, living in a world for which he has no responsibility.

The second conjecture (b) sees him as one awakened out of the madness of his "sleepwalking".

The third conjecture (c) proposes a misfortune for which he can take no responsibility. He proposes another cause than himself.

The fourth conjecture (d). As when awakening out of the grip of a horrifying nightmare the dreamer reminds himself that his conscious life is beyond and outside the

the illusory world of birth, death and sensory experience. Such is the teaching of Indian philosphy.

(vii) Borges and I[29]

The anonymous and mysterious "I" finds an identity in the public life of the person known as "Borges." The "I" can be known through his effects. It is as if the "I" lives in "a house", which the "I" has built and by which the "I" is known. Thus the house is not the "I". Tellingly Borges writes: "What is 'to be famous' but to be taken for someone else?"[30] The famous have created a fiction by which they are known; but the mysterious self or "I" that has created this fiction can never be fully grasped.

(viii) Everything and Nothing[31]

In Shakespeare there was an inner emptiness, an emptiness filled by the parts he played as an actor. "History adds that before or after dying he found himself in the presence of God and told Him: 'I who have been so many men in vain want to be one and myself.' The voice of the Lord answered from a whirlwind: 'Neither am I anyone; I have dreamt the world as you dreamt your work, my Shakespeare, and among the forms in my dream are you, who like myself are many and no one.'"[32] In the characters Shakespeare created he left hints of a personal confession. "Richard affirms that in his person he plays the part of many and Iago claims with curious words: 'I am not what I am?'"[32] If Shakespeare is to be taken as a

am not what I am?'"[32] If Shakespeare is to be taken as a paradigm for mankind, then man also may long to find a singularity in himself, but it will elude him. He must be content to dream his work and live with the mystery that he calls "I".

12.5 **Some Gleanings from the Eight Parables**

(i) While mankind can create a fiction by which he is recognized and known, there is something of himself which is essentially mysterious. However, God can make known the secret purpose of an individual's life.

(ii) By what we see of the image of God in others we can see something of the face of God. To know the face of God is to possess the key to all parables.

(iii) Confronted by the gods made in their own image, the people kill the gods to protect themselves.

(iv) The beginning and end of literature is myth.

(v) Mankind can be the bearer of images, some of which will never be revealed to another soul.

(vi) With a fictional fantasy of killing there are four ways of responding to it.

(a) It can be dismissed as having no reality.

(b) It can cause a crisis of awakening into reality.

(c) One is unable to take responsibility for the fictional killing.

(d) The fictional killing is thought to be illusory.

(vii) The anonymous and mysterious "I" finds something of an identity in the character made for others to meet and know.

(viii) A longing for singularity may not be satisfied; men and women find there significance from one another.

12.6 **Borges's Expectations of a Reader**

The enigmatic quality of the parables of Borges requires an interplay between the reader and the text. "Reading is playing the text, and the text demands the reader's collaboration."[33] One is reminded of the Jewish interpretative approach to the Scriptures or Midrash. "'What,' asks Rawidowicz,'did God give to Moses and Moses bring to Israel? A "text" for interpretatio; not a finished, independent, self-sufficient text, but one which is open and has to remain open to interpretatio.'"[34] However, it is not only the relation between the text and the reader that elucidates meaning. Borges, by his "literature of literature and thought" allows for the reader to discover meaning by the interrelationship between one literary allusion and another, not only within the same piece of writing but between different pieces of writing. "Borges's work reminds us of the...traits of the midrash, which in order to state the meaning of fragments of the Pentateuchal text turns to fragments of yet other texts. In this way the Bible becomes both a self-referential and omni-explicative text."[35] "The Rabbinic

world is, to use a contemporary term, one of intertextuality. Texts echo, interact, and interpenetrate."[36] "Since the aim of midrash is to reveal the unlimited richness of the Word of God, it brings to the foreground the polysemic nature of the Biblical text...The concept of the inherent polysemy[37] of the literary text which nullifies the possibility of a univocal interpretation is one of the arch principles of midrash. It is also central to Borges's Work."[38]

Notes

1. Giovanna de Garayalde, Jorge Luis Borges: Sources and Illuminations (London: The Octagon Press, 1978) p.35.

2. Carlos Cortinez (Editor), "Simply a Man of Letters", Symposium on Jorge Luis Borges (Orono, Maine: University of Maine at Orono Press, 1982) p.23.

3. Borges, "Borges and I", Parables, Labyrinths, Edited by Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986) p.282.

4. Borges, "Borges and I", Parables, Labyrinths, op.cit., p.283.

5. Borges, "A New Refutation of Time", Labyrinths, op.cit., p.269.

6. C.G.Jung, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, Second Edition, Collected Works Volume 7, Edited by Sir Herbert Read, M. Fordham, and G.Adler (Princeton University Press, 1963, 1970) p.175.

7. Samuels, Shorter, and Plant, A Critical Dictionary of Jungian Analysis (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987) p.50.

8. C.G.Jung, Word and Image, Edited by Aniela Jaffe, Bollingen Series XCVII:2 (Princeton University Press, 1979) p.229. Quoted from Collected Works, op.cit., Volume 12, Psychology and Alchemy, Second Edition, paragraph 11.

9. Jorge Luis Borges, Other Inquisitions, Translated by Ruth L.C.Simms (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1965) p.12.

10. Adolfo Bioy Casares, "Los Libros" Sur 92, 1942. 60 Myrna Solotorevsky: "The Model of Midrash and Borges's Interpretative Tales and Essays" Geoffrey Hartman and Sanford Budick: Midrash and Literature (Yale University Press, 1986) pp. 253-254.

11. Borges, Labyrinths, op.cit., pp.62-71.

12. Borges, Labyrinths, ibid. pp.65-66.

13. Borges, "Inferno, I, 32", Parables, Labyrinths, op.cit., p.273.

14. Jorges Luis Borges, Labyrinths, Edited by D.A.Yates and J.E.Irby (Harmondsworth: London, 1986) pp.273-285.

15. Dante, The Divine Comedy, I: Hell, Canto I, lines 31-36, Translated by Dorothy Sayers (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1949) p.72.

16. Borges, "Paradiso, XXXI, 108", Parables, Labyrinths, op.cit., p.275.

17. Borges, The Aleph and Other Stories, 1933-1969, Translation by Norman Thomas di Giovanni (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971) pp.82-83. Quoted by de Garayalde op.cit. p.28.

18. de Garayalde, op.cit., p.27.

19. Borges, "Paradiso, XXXI, 108" op.cit., p.274.

20. Borges, ibid., p.274.

21. "He has seen the glory of the Lord." (LXX)

22. Borges, "Paradiso, XXXI, 108", op.cit., pp.274-275.

23. Borges, "Ragnarok", Parables, Labyrinths, op.cit., p.276.

24. Encyclopedia Britannica, Volume 18, 1948, p.914.

25. Borges, "Parable of Cervantes and the Quixote", Parables, Labyrinths, op.cit., p.278.

26. Borges, ibid., p.278.

27. Borges, "The Witness", Parables, Labyrinths, op.cit., p.279.

28. Borges, "A Problem", Parables, Labyrinths, op.cit., p.280.

29. Borges, "Borges and I", Parables, Labyrinths, op.cit., p.282.

30. Carlos Cortinez (Editor), "Simply a Man of Letters", Symposium on Jorge Luis Borges, (Orono, Maine: University of Maine at Orono Press, 1982) p.16.

31. Borges, "Everything and Nothing", Parables, Labyrinths, op.cit., p.284.

32. Borges, ibid., p.285.

33. Roland Barthes, Image-Music-Text, (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1977) p.58. Quoted in Susan Handelman, The Slayers of Moses (Albany: State University of New York, 1982) p.80.

34. Nahum Glatzer (Editor), Simon Rawidowicz, "On Interpretation", Studies in Jewish Thought (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1974) p.52. Quoted in Susan Handelman op.cit. p.42.

35. Myrna Solotorevsky, "The Model of Midrash and Borges' Interpretative Tales and Essays". Geoffrey Hartman and Sanford Budick, Midrash and Literature p.254.

36. Susan Handelman, The Slayers of Moses op.cit., p.47.

37. Polysemy: plurality of meanings.

38. Solotorevsky, op.cit., p.255.

Chapter 13

SPEAKING IN PARABLES

13.1 Introduction

By a reading of Sallie McFague's book, Speaking in Parables, I hope to discern what in her thinking I have been able to affirm, in what ways my thinking has diverged, and where I have explored other avenues.

13.2 A Metaphorical Theology

In the introduction to her book she proposes the need for a theology that thinks metaphorically. "If theology becomes overly abstract, conceptual, and systematic, it separates thought and life, belief and practice, words and their embodiment, making it more difficult if not impossible for us to believe in our hearts what we confess with our lips."(1-2)[1] She seems to be making an appeal for an integrated balance between the rational, imaginative, feeling, and intuitive factors in thinking.

"Having begun with the poetry of parable, metaphor, simile and aphorism, it seems that theology is being thrust back on its infancy."(24)[2] Even the conceptual nature of Paul's theology is embedded in metaphor. "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ."(I Corinthians 12.12) On the contrast between conceptual and imaginative thinking Sallie McFague's thought is supported by C.G.Jung: "Concepts are

coined and negotiable values; images are life."[3] Concepts are derived, to be argued about, and to be subjected to reasoning. Images are enlivening; they are the means by which we call out the dynamic of living.

13.3 **The Divine in the Ordinary**

"In the parabolic tradition people are not asked to be 'religious' or taken out of this world; rather, the transcendent comes to ordinary reality and disrupts it. The parable sees 'religious' matters in 'secular' terms."(2-3) Transcendent means "pertaining to what transcends experience...beyond human knowledge"[4] The word transcendent may not be entirely appropriate. Might she not be describing what could be called subliminal or unconscious intrusion? Why does she need to use the word transcendent? The parable could be evoking a latent dimension of thought which is <u>within</u> rather than <u>beyond</u> "ordinary reality". It is as if a person who has only known of two dimensions becomes aware of the third dimension. The "one-eyed" person acquires the use of the other "eye", thus being enabled to recognize the third dimension. It is not so much another world which the person perceives, but another dimension in the same world. The gospel of Luke records an incident that could throw doubt on her idea of a transcendent disruption. "Once Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, and he answered, 'The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they

say, "Look, here it is!" or "There it is!" For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you.'"[5](Luke 17.20-21) This would seem to propose that parables of the Kingdom are not about the transcendent coming into ordinary reality and disrupting it. Rather the reality is within experience for those who have eyes to "see". Guided by the principle of Occam's Razor, "Entities are not to be multiplied beyond necessity"[6] is it necessary to posit a transcendent category that disrupts ordinary reality? Martin Buber appears to support Sallie McFague's position in one respect but not in another. She writes: "In the parabolic tradition people are not asked to be 'religious' or taken out of this world." In a similar vein Martin Buber writes: "I have given up the 'religious' which is nothing but the exception, extraction, exaltation, ecstasy."[7] But there also seems to be a difference between them. Sallie McFague writes: "The transcendent reality come to ordinary reality and disrupts it. The parable sees 'religious' matters in 'secular' terms."(3) But in contrast Buber writes: "I have given up the 'religious'...or <u>it has given me up</u>. I possess nothing but the everyday out of which I am never taken."[8] Presumably by "religious" he means exception, extraction, exaltation, and ecstasy. By saying that the "religious" has given him up he implies that the exceptional or ecstatic no longer invades his experience. He is wedded to the everyday. "The mystery is no longer disclosed, it

has escaped or it has made its dwelling here where everything happens as its happens."[9] I guess that "the mystery" of which Buber writes is what Sallie Mcfague calls "the transcendent".

13.4 **The Distinctive Qualities of the Parable**

In a paragraph that provides a key to some central issues in her thinking Sallie McFague writes with reference to a parable by Kafka, entitled "Give it Up".[10] "This parable is an extended metaphor, and, as a genuine metaphor, it is not translatable into concepts. To be sure, it is shot through with open-endedness, with pregnant silences, with cracks opening into mystery. But it remains profoundly impenetrable...Kafka's parables, like all genuine parables, are themselves actuality - the parables are a figurative representation of an actual, total meaning, so they do not "stand for" anything but <u>are</u> life. This means we must make a very careful analysis of all the parts of the parable for they <u>are</u> the <u>meaning</u> of it. The meaning is not a separate realm, something that can be pointed to; the totality of all the processes of life and thought in the parable <u>is</u> its meaning."(67) Note that she writes that "it is not translatable"(67) By translation I understand the carrying over of a meaning from one context or milieu to another. Thus presumably she means that the meaning of the parable cannot be put into different words and thought patterns to facilitate the reader in understanding. According to her thinking it

would seem as if a parable "coins a new word" for which there is no other language equivalent. Furthermore the parables "do not 'stand for' anything but are life". That is, they cannot be worked over to distil a meaning which is hidden to all except the initiated. Thus she rejects the idea that a typical parable can be an allegory. "What Kafka's parables are all 'about' is simply the incomprehensibility of the incomprehensible."(67)

There is a kind of parallel here with the impatience of a painter who is asked what his painting means. He would most probably answer that if he could explain what it means he would not have painted it. The painting has to be its own interpreter. An explanation would only impoverish or misrepresent the "intrinsic message" of the painting. As Picasso writes: "Everyone wants to understand art. Why not try to understand the song of a bird?"[11]

13.5 **A Resonance of Meaning**

Nevertheless I would propose paradoxically that the parable has in some sense to be translatable, since a meaning needs to be carried over to the reader. That meaning may be perceived in feelings, images, thought forms or words familiar to the reader. Otherwise the parable fails in its purpose to communicate. For this to happen, I would propose an oblique approach to a text. Consider the interpretration or appropriation of a dream, which is in some sense like a parable. Note Jung's

comment about the parabolic nature of dreams. In the case of a dream its strangeness has to be received or translated by the conscious mind. One way in which this is done is to bring the memories of conscious experience to the details of the dream. By a kind of intertextuality connections are intuited between the dream and conscious memories. The dream begins to lose its strangeness when conscious thought and the dream are found to be complementary. The dream and conscious thought are foreign languages to each other, but bring them together and they interpret one another when the time is ripe. In a similar way the parable may unfold its enigmas when the reader brings to the text the fruits of experience and reflection. In the Jewish interpretation of Scripture or Midrash "there is a constant interplay, an ongoing interchange, between everyday affairs and the the word of God in the Torah - Scripture. What we see reminds us of what Scripture says - and what Scripture says informs our understanding of the things we see and do in everyday life...Everyday life forms a commentary on revealed Scripture...and Scripture...provides a commentary on everyday life. Life flows in both directions."[12]

What then is happening between a parable and its reader? Consider the effect of a metronome adjusted to the pulse rate of the heartbeat; with resonance the heart beats more vigorously. So it is that the meaning of the parable is carried over to resonate in the reader.

Translation in this sense is not an attempt to find language equivalents. But from the metaphors of the parable the reader finds resonances in his own mind. "A bird does not sing because he has a statement. He sings because he has a song. The words of the Scholar are to be understood. The words of the Master are not to be understood. They are to be listened to as one listens to the wind in the trees and the sound of the river and the song of the bird. They will awaken something within the heart that is beyond all knowledge."[13] Scholars negotiate meanings or translate them into their own thought forms. A disciple resonates with the parables of the Master.

13.6 **The Child**

From the gospels, it is evident that the mind of the child is commended as making a person fit for the kingdom of heaven. "Let the little children come to me...for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs." (Matthew 19.14; Mark 10.14-15; Luke 18.16-17) This is sometimes misunderstood as a regression to infancy. But in fact Matthew's and John's gospels record the words: "Unless you change and become(γένεσθε) like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven"(Matthew 18.3) "To all who received him...he gave power to become (γενέσθαι) children of God."(John 1.12) Disciples are expected to become rather than remain children. It is as if the disciple is to hold on to his or her birthright and develop the "child" into adult life. That the nature of

the "child" is often misunderstood is not surprising since in only one place is there any explicit quality of the child mentioned, namely humility. "Whoever becomes humble like this child, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."(Matthew 18.4)

About Sallie McFague's concern for the rehabilitation of metaphor, characteristic of the parable, I would add the need for a reassessment of the importance of the childlike mind. Note particularly the child's capacity to improvise imaginative play. "It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.'"(Matthew 11.16-27 and Luke 7.32)

By the roles they play they are enabled to think through their concerns. "Because children cannot always reason their way into a situation, especially where there are problems, they will feel or fantasise their way into it. This is why play is an important educational activity. It is not merely a letting off of steam but play makes a serious contribution towards children's discovery of knowledge."[14] "Perhaps this is one major problem for religious teachers, that they find it difficult to concede that such a serious topic as religion can be approached playfully or the child encouraged to fantasise about God. Yet this is his natural method of thinking, of expressing himself and searching."[15] As the child plays his game, so Jesus "plays" his parable. "With

what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it?"(Mark 4.30) Through this "play" or parable the hearer is enabled to discover new perpectives.

To live in the present moment, such is the carefree, undistracted mind of the child. In the gospels it suggests that the kingdom of God is to be experienced in the present moment. "The kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."(Mark 1.15) "The kingdom of God is among you."(Luke 17.21) The reader will need to be available to the parable that it may work its "playful" effects upon him.

As I have mentioned earlier in this thesis to be receptive one has to be "ignorant" in the present moment. Without a kind of self-emptying the reader is not available to respond to the parable; his mind is pre-occupied. On the other hand with little foreknowledge and few if any prejudices the childlike reader comes to participate and perhaps to enquire. Without the baggage of scholarship the reader comes "alone" to the parable.

Perhaps the best word to describe the response to a parable is appropriation, that is to make it our own. Kafka expresses it more powerfully when he writes: "If you only followed the parables you yourselves would become parables." It is perhaps the "child" in us that can dare to "become parables".

If the childlike reader is to be recovered in us, what are we to say about the sophisticated role of

scholarship? I would propose that these two roles are complementary. For example, as I have discussed earlier in this thesis, there are two approaches to the exposition of the Jewish Torah. Haggadah teaches by the story, so beloved by the "child" in us. Halakah, like scholarship, is the rational discussion of the the legal implications of the law. As Rabbi Abraham Heschel summarizes: "Halakah without Haggadah is dead, Haggadah without Halakah is wild."[16] But there is a journey to be made. As we leave behind the innocence and unreflective consciousness of childhood we acquire the language and skills of self-awareness and reasoning. And with the passing of childhood comes critical awareness and discernment. But the skills of criticism are by themselves not enough. The mind still needs to feed on the stories of the imagination so acceptable to the "child". Ricoeur reminds us: "We are in every way children of criticism, and we seek to go beyond criticism by means of criticism, by a criticism that is no longer reductive but restorative."[17] "Does that mean that we could go back to a primitive naïveté? Not at all. In every way, something has been lost, irremediably lost: immediacy of belief."[18] "The second immediacy that we seek and the second naïveté that we await are no longer accessible to us anywhere else than in a hermeneutics; we can believe only by interpreting."[19] What he calls the second naïveté I would call the recovery of the "child".

"Unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."(Matthew 18.3) It is the "child" in the adult that finds its way into the heart of a parable. But it is the language of adult interpretation or hermeneutics that gives tongue to what it understands.

13.7 **Conclusion**

This thesis began with a discussion about intellectual integrity, proposing that there is a tension between the reader's personal and original response to a text and the claims of scholarship to open up meaning and significance. My proposition is that reader response and literary-theological criticism need to work together. If there is one without the other, the imbalance leads to an eccentric or a lame reading. I remember as a student feeling frustrated by being presented with critical theories before I had even begun to grapple with the text on my own. I was made to feel a stranger to the text even before I had made any personal observations or reacted with questions. On the other hand the developing literary-theological, critical theories give us new ways of appropriating the text. They are like a new vocabulary with which new approaches to meaning and significance can be explored. My contention is that we need to find an integrity between these approaches. Only when the artist-child and the critic work in a harmonious balance can there be a life-engaging encounter with the parable. As

has been said already these two approaches are like the linguistic and intuitive functions of the left and right sides of the brain. It is perhaps a particularly significant fact that the extended metaphor of the parable engages the imaginative right side and the linguistic left side of the brain simultaneously. Thus there is a wholeness of engagement.

Notes

1. The numbers in brackets refer to the page numbers in Sallie McFague's book, Speaking In Parables (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975)

2. Robert W.Funk, "Myth and the Literal Non-Literal", in Parable, Myth and Language, Edited by Tony Stoneburner (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Church Society for College Work, 1968) p.63.

3. C.G.Jung: Psychological Reflections, Selected and Edited by Jolande Jacobi (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974) p.201. Quoted from C.G.Jung, Mysterium Coniunctionis, Collected Works, Volume 14, paragraph 226.

4. Chambers English Dictionary (Edinburgh: W.R.Chambers and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) p.1557

5. Or "within you" Greek: "ἐντὸς ὑμῶν".

6. Jennifer Speake (Editor), "Ockham's Razor", A Dictionary of Philosophy (London: Pan Books, 1979) p.236.

7. Martin Buber, Between Man and Man, Translated and Introduced by Ronald Gregor Smith (London and Glasgow: The Fontana Library, Collins, 1961) p.31.

8. Buber, ibid., pp.31-32. (My underlining)

9. Buber, ibid., p.32.

10. Franz Kafka, The Collected Short Stories of Franz Kafka, Edited by Nahum Glatzer (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988) p.456.

11. Robert Goldwater and Marco Treves, Artists on Art (London: John Murray, 1978) p.421.

12. Jacob Neusner, What is Midrash? (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987) p.103.

13. Anthony de Mello, The Song of the Bird (Anand, India: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1982) p.5.

14. Ronald Goldman, Readiness for Religion (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965) p.78.

15. Goldman, ibid. pp.85-86.

16. The Assembly of Rabbis of the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, Forms of Prayer for Jewish Worship (London: The Reform Synagogues of Great Britain) p.361.

17. Paul Ricoeur: The Symbolism of Evil (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969) p.350.

18. Ricoeur, ibid., p.351.

19. Ricoeur, ibid., p.352.

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