

THE INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION
OF THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

by

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The Parable of the Sower and its interpretation (Matt 13, Mk 4, Lk 4) were undoubtedly spoken several different times by Christ. This fact vitiates against the concept that it has an eschatological meaning alone, as some would suggest from Matthew 13. The harmony of the three canonic accounts provides a more complete understanding of the parable as it was taught in different contexts.

The figurative nature of the parable has caused many to question or deny its use in doctrinal matters. A consistent hermeneutic allows the parable to be used doctrinally, as long as it is properly interpreted in light of its cultural and grammatical backgrounds. Significant turning points in the history of parabolic interpretation have centered around Origen, Julicher, Dodd and Jeremias. The extremes of the former two have developed into a more palatable hermeneutic by the latter two men.

Based upon the conclusion that both doctrine and ethics are taught in parables, the specific intent of the Parable of the Sower is addressed. The wayside soil is almost universally interpreted as representing an unbeliever. It functions as a stark contrast to the fruit-bearing seed of the fourth soil. The rocky soil is categorized with the wayside soil through the use of ὁμοίως in Mark 4:16. This seed is pictured as one which "stumbles" (σκανδαλίζομαι--Matt 13:21; Mk 4:17), and then "falls away" (ἀφίστανται--Lk 8:13). The seed was received, as opposed to the first seed, but no fruit was produced. The third seed is choked, with the result that it "brings no fruit to maturity" (τελεσφοροῦσιν--Lu 8:14). Matthew 13:22 and Mark 4:19 add ἄκαρπος γίνεται. This does not indicate the dwindling of fruit already present. As Mark 4:7 shows, the person became unfruitful from the outset, and therefore yielded no fruit.

Only the fourth seed bears fruit.. Key words of acceptance indicate the uniqueness of this seed (Matt 13:23--συνεῖς; Mk 4:20--παραδέχονται; Lk 8:15--κατέχουσιν). These key words draw a sharp distinction between this seed and the first three. Matthew 13:23 uses δὴ to indicate the reality and necessity of fruitbearing. The degrees of fruitfulness are similar to the scheme of John 15:2,5. Christians produce varying amounts of fruit, but this parable makes it a point to show that true Christians do bear fruit.

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INTRODUCTION

The Parable of the Sower has been given a great deal of attention because it is one of only two parables interpreted by Christ. Some question the authenticity of the interpretation on historical grounds, while others question it on hermeneutical grounds. Its authenticity will be proven to be not only probable, but unquestionable.

Current thought about parabolic interpretation is the result of a continuing evolution of theory in that area. The process and effects of that evolution will be studied by looking at key interpreters throughout Church history.

In interpretation, some see all four soils representing Christians, while others see three, two, or just one believer being depicted. It will be demonstrated that the Greek text carefully sets apart the fourth soil as uniquely different from the preceding three. Spiritual receptivity and productivity are the pivotal concepts in conveying the distinctiveness of this, the only believing, fruitbearing soil.

CHAPTER I

THE CONTEXT AND SETTING

In order to derive the proper interpretation of the Parable of the Sower, it is necessary to initially determine its literary and historical boundaries. Christ originally spoke this parable in a specific historical setting, and the synoptic writers placed the accounts of it in definite textual contexts. This study aids in pinpointing both the intended audience and the theological significance which the synoptics give to the Parable of the Sower.

The Synoptic Harmony of the Parable of the Sower

The harmonization of this parable has met with very little opposition. The three different accounts complement one another to provide a full-orbed picture of the parable and its interpretation.

Though throughout there is not even an inkling of real conflict between the three accounts (Mt 13:1-9; Mk 4:1-9; Lk 8:4-8), yet in not a single case does a verse in Luke exactly duplicate the corresponding verse in either of the other Gospels.¹

¹William Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary, Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), p. 421.

This beautiful harmonization is an indictment against those who suggest that the interpretation was a later addition by the church. If such were the case, all three accounts would have to be amended to agree not only externally with one another, but internally with the writing style of each synoptic writer.

Variations in the Synoptic Accounts

Although the synoptics show a remarkable harmony between their accounts, a sizeable number of variations exist between them as well.¹ The mere fact that variations are extant in the synoptic texts is sufficient evidence to affirm that not one of the Evangelists gives a complete record of Christ's spoken words.

It is not supposed that the writers, taken together, give a complete account; it is evident that together their accounts give a more complete description of the actual incidents. This type of importance prohibits the study of a parable in any way that does not take into account all gospel accounts of it.²

The varying accounts imply that the parable could have been spoken several different times to varying audiences on divergent occasions. The essential information of the parable remains the same in all three accounts, yet the synoptic writers recorded the parable with different purposes in mind.

¹See Appendix for a detailed picture of the variations and similarities in the synoptic accounts. Points of major interpretive significance will be discussed in the text of the paper.

²George Goldsmith, "A Methodology in Interpreting the Parable of the Sower" (Th.M. Thesis, Talbot Theological Seminary, 1979), p. 6.

Their combined testimony adds depth to the reader's understanding of the life of Christ in general, and the Parable of the Sower in particular. Each gospel writer conveyed a distinctive message to his intended audience. The variations between accounts can be seen best in light of the fact that each writer selected the material which was the most congenial and useful for his specific purpose. Each gospel portrait of Christ gives an impression of completeness and unity, "yet the various pictures blend together to give a more comprehensive and grander whole."¹ At every juncture, the exact words of Christ cannot be determined dogmatically, but the inspired accounts of them provide a thorough-going understanding of what He taught.

Authenticity of the Text

Critics of the text most often attribute the Parable itself to Christ, but ascribe its interpretation to the early Church. A superficial reading could raise questions concerning the origin of parable interpretations because only this and the Parable of the Tares are interpreted in the text. The interpretations are conspicuous because only two out of more than thirty recorded parables of Christ are given such treatment.²

¹D. Edmond Hiebert, An Introduction to the New Testament, 3 vols. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), 1:34.

²The number of parables attributed to Christ is dependent upon the interpreter's definition of a parable. Trench deals with the conservative estimate of thirty parables. See Richard Chenevix Trench, Notes on the Parables of Our Lord (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1948), pp. 5-6.

Joachim Jeremias defends the early church view on linguistic grounds.¹ Beginning with a rationalistic apologetic, Jeremias proves what he has already ASSUMED to be true. By assuming that the term ὁ λόγος was a technical term coined by the church, he helps to validate his own conclusion. But the fact is that this assumption cannot be proven. This phrase alone was commonly used by Hellenistic people centuries before Christ, and to assign technical meaning to the term by one group is subjective and presumptuous.² The argument by Jeremias concerning certain rare words in the synoptics is greatly weakened when the nature of the Gospels is compared to the nature of the Epistles. The Synoptic Gospels, to a large extent, are accounts of the

¹Joachim Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), pp. 77-78. His defense is summarized in five propositions.

- A. The term ὁ λόγος is a technical term for the gospel coined and constantly used by the primitive Church.
- B. In Mark 4:13-20, there are a number of words which do not occur elsewhere in the Synoptics, but are common in the rest of New Testament literature, especially Paul.
- C. The interpretation of 'sowing' as preaching (Mk 4:14) is not characteristic of Jesus' way of speaking.
- D. The interpretation of the parable misses the eschatological point of the parable. The emphasis is transferred from the eschatological to the psychological aspect of the parable.
- E. The fact that the Gospel of Thomas leaves the parable uninterpreted confirms the position.

²E. J. Tinsley, "The Gospel According to Luke," in the Cambridge Bible Commentary, editors P. R. Ackroyd, A. R. C. Leaney and J. W. Packers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), p. 88.

life of Christ as He ministered to unbelieving hearers. The Epistles are ALL letters to Christian churches or individuals. It is significant then to note that both of the parables which are interpreted in Scripture are interpreted to believing disciples alone. The diverse character of the hearers of the parable and the recipients of its interpretation is central to a proper understanding of the reasons for different phraseology.

Jeremias also posits that Christ would not "allegorize" the term "sowing" to make it refer to preaching. This is only one small part of a larger proposition that Christ did not use allegory in giving parables or interpreting them. Contrary to this opinion, it is quite obvious that He used allegory often. It is very well suited for "picturing" truths, especially when audiences were as diverse as Christ's. He spoke to educated scribes and illiterate fishermen at the same time. The whole spectrum of religious, social, academic and economic classes heard Jesus teach. Objects and experiences which were an integral part of every Palestinian person's life were used as concrete illustrations of abstract truths.

The prerogative of using allegory in this situation was that of Christ alone. He told the parable, and only He knew what He intended to teach by it. The "picture" which Christ gave in the Parable of the Sower illustrated a truth which only He could interpret. "Allegory as a

method is quite clearly used in such parables as the wicked vine-growers (Lk 20:9-19), the two sons (15:11-32) and the good Samaritan (10:29-37)."¹ It is only the prerogative of the giver of the parable to in turn give an allegorical interpretation to it.

The early Church did not have the right to allegorize another person's parable, nor do interpreters today have that right. If the possibility of an early Church interpretation is allowed, the integrity of all Scripture is at stake. The conjecture of allegorical interpretations is no more valid from the early Church than it is today. Only the parable giver has the right to allegorically interpret it!

Other proponents of the early Church interpretation claim support from the fact that the content of the interpretation is much better suited to the early Church than during the ministry of Christ Himself. It is stated that at this time in Christ's earthly ministry He was a popular figure of great acclaim, and even the mention of persecution is premature.

Who would have been the persecutors? It can hardly be doubted that it is a later addition referring to subsequent persecutions on account of the Christian Gospel.²

¹Ibid.

²W. O. E. Oesterly, The Gospel Parables in the Light of Their Jewish Background (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1936), p. 44.

This objection to the Parable of the Sower is only a specific application of the more general arguments used by Jeremias. It is simply countered by a challenge to read the context. Jesus Christ preached the same Gospel of repentance that the early Church did, and both were persecuted. The Matthew 13 parables are immediately followed by the rejection of Christ at Nazareth, and are then followed by the beheading of John the Baptist. The Saducees, Pharisees, priests and elders were continually disputing and antagonizing Jesus with the aid of a multitude of demons. Jesus was aware of persecution in His own experience, and He also knew of coming persecution for his disciples. One of the purposes of this parable was to prepare his disciples for that persecution. It must also be noted that the parable and its interpretation give no time limit to the persecution on the second soil. Matthew 13:21 simply states as a fact, "WHEN tribulation or persecution arises."

Some critics ask why the interpretation was needed at all. It is supposed that Christ's original parable was simple enough in itself and needed no explanation, but the evangelists sought to clarify it by adding the interpretation. Historically, no parallels to Christ's parables have been found outside of the Gospels. It is well documented that none of the early Church leaders used a parabolic teaching method. It is therefore difficult to claim support for a view that the well-known evangelists used

parabolic teachings, considering that there is no record at all of such activity.¹

Arguments both pro and con could be considered endlessly, but such discussion is not the purpose here. The few assertions and rebuttals already discussed serve only to illustrate the fact that both sides have multiplied defenses for their positions. The conclusion that the interpretation of the Parable of the Sower originated with Jesus Himself can be defended linguistically, historically and doctrinally.² If the interpretation is a later addition by the early Church, it must be rejected totally because it is merely human comment, and therefore uninspired. If this position had been accepted, a study such as this would necessarily cease immediately. An uninspired addition to the text would not even have a moral value as some would claim, because it is not from God.³

Setting of the Parable

One of the great needs for the science of hermeneutics is "that we may span the linguistical, cultural,

¹Robert H. Stein, The Method and Message of Jesus' Teachings (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), p. 44.

²"Doctrinally" refers to the inherent implications of verbal plenary inspiration. To allow additions to the original biblical text is to admit that portions of Scripture have only a human origin.

³Eta Linneman, Parables of Jesus (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1966), p. 117.

geographical, and historical gaps which separate our minds from those of the Biblical writers."¹ The questions of "when," "why," and "how" did Jesus give the Parable of the Sower need to be asked in order to understand its interpretation more fully.

The Setting in the Text

The Parable is used by the three Synoptic Evangelists in three different textual settings. Matthew places it in a textual setting with six other parables and uses it as an introduction to them. Mark, who is often presumed to be the primary source for the other evangelists,² loosely connects his accounts so that it is difficult to place it chronologically and logically. This is evidenced by Mark's frequent use of "immediately" to bridge a time span (cf. Mk 5:2,29-30,42; 6:45).

The vagueness of Luke's introduction (8:4) shows that there is "no continuity of events between this and the preceding events."³ Matthew's account appears to be the only one of the three to place great significance on the position of the parable in the text. The narrative of Matthew is the most consistent chronological record of the

¹Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation (Boston: W. A. Wilde Company, 1950), p. 7.

²Linneman, Parables of Jesus, p. 114.

³Bernard Orchard, Matthew, Luke and Mark (Manchester: Koinonia Press, 1976), p. 102.

three, and its context reveals a mounting attitude of rejection by the opposing leaders. Many conservative commentators believe that "Matthew 12 represents the great turning point of the book, and that Matthew 13 marks out the dispensational parenthesis known as the church age or the inter-regnum."¹ The placement of the Parable in Matthew 13 is of great importance because this account gives the best picture of when in Christ's ministry the parable was spoken. If the accounts of Mark and Luke refer to different occasions, their chronological settings are treated as of little significance.

The Time Setting in Christ's Ministry

Although Matthew 13 and the other synoptics are by no means exhaustive in establishing the total setting, "there is ample information to characterize developments of the period."² Regardless of the length of the time span between the previous events and the parable, it can be confidently established that rejection of Christ had reached new heights. Matthew 12 reveals the spiritual disparity between Christ and the Pharisees who mockingly sought for a sign. Mark 3 records Christ's anger at the Pharisees and their hardened hearts. His disciples undoubtedly had questions and doubts as well.

¹W. Merwin Forbes, "The Interpretation of Matthew 13" (Postgraduate Seminar in Hermeneutics, Grace Theological Seminary, 1973), p. 15.

²Goldsmith, "A Methodology," p. 111.

He had been driven from the synagogues and His own family had shown misgivings about Him. Was the great Kingdom of God emprise to which Jesus had called them foredoomed to failure? This parable was the answer to such forebodings.¹

The same parable which was used to reveal truth to the disciples was used to veil truth to the multitude.² Following the blasphemous accusation by the Pharisees (Mt 12:22-28) and the denouncement by His relatives (Mk 3:21), "he notably changed his style."³ The period of synagogue preaching and healing has given place, beginning at (Mark) 3:7, to a ministry of the same kind in the open air."⁴ A significant turn in the ministry of Christ takes place at the end of Matthew 12.

The position of the 'whosoever' at the close of the twelfth chapter is most instructive, for it immediately follows the description of the nation's condition as depicted in the parable of the unclean spirit, and was uttered in connection with His repudiation of earthly relationships.⁵

¹Archibald M. Hunter, The Parables Then and Now (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), p. 36.

²G. Campbell Morgan, The Parables and Metaphors of Our Lord (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1943), p. 17.

³Milton S. Terry, Biblical Hermeneutics (New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1890), p. 190.

⁴William Neil, "Expounding the Parables: The Sower (Mark 4:3-8)," Expository Times 77 (December 1965):75.

⁵Ada R. Habershon, The Study of the Parables (London: James Nisbet and Company, 1905; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1957), p. 123.

Israel had repeatedly rejected Christ and the kingdom which He offered, with the result being a veiling of truth in parables and the offer of the kingdom to all nations. The first intimations of these changes are revealed in the Parable of the Sower. Prior to this time, the crowds and the disciples are taught simultaneously with no special interpretation given to either group. The Parable marks the beginning of a vivid contrast between the spiritually inert crowds and the inquiring disciples.¹

The changes which surround the Parable are indicators of its importance as an introduction to the following events. The parables and events recorded in the synoptics are not necessarily chronological. Mark illustrates this by recording Christ in a boat speaking to a crowd, privately with the disciples, and again in the boat (Mk 4:36). "What Mark is implying is that this was a typical occurrence in the lakeside ministry."² The fact that all three accounts place the Parable of the Sower first is good evidence to support the fact that it was an initial parable to introduce the other parables.

The Cultural Setting

"The Parable of the Sower was given in no historical vacuum. That event was fixed squarely in a context of the

¹Birger Gerhardsson, "The Parable of the Sower and Its Interpretation," New Testament Studies 14 (January 1968): 173.

²Neil, "Expounding the Parables," p. 75.

life of Jesus Christ."¹ The Palestinian culture surrounded Christ as He spoke the Parable, and it is from this culture that the Parable is drawn.

The Parable may have been prompted by the sight of a farmer on the slopes actually sowing his field at the time. The scene is realistic, purely Palestinian, and there is no reason to think that the story was concocted² to serve the preaching purposes of later missionaries.

The people to whom Christ spoke were not unaffected by past and present influences. They were a heterogeneous group of farmers, fishermen, tax-collectors, soldiers, scribes, Pharisees and more.

Conquering empires repeatedly traversed the country leaving cultural distinctives to be assimilated into the already diverse culture. Persia seemed to have distilled Israel's desire for the law and her distinctive forms of worship.³ Greece brought its concepts of culture and philosophy to be adopted into Jewish thought. Rome was an ever-present reminder that Israel was not a nation in its own right, and that the people were subjects of Rome. It also gave rise to high and distorted Messianic expectations. The legalistic Pharisees, aristocratic Sadducees and the Scribes had all but buried the Law with their forms and rituals. The Zealots provided a political option on the "far right," and the Essenes provided a similar option on

¹Goldsmith, "A Methodology," p. 104.

²Neil, "Expounding the Parables," p. 74.

³Goldsmith, "A Methodology," p. 105.

the religious right.¹ Communication was slow, but all of these groups exerted influence throughout all of Palestine.

In the midst of this diverse culture were the Jews who regularly worshipped in the synagogues. When this group heard Christ speak in parables, the content was new, but the form was very similar to that which was used by the rabbis in explaining the Torah.² The Palestinian culture had been provided with a basis for parabolic thought in Hebrew and Greek literature.³ Christ built upon this foundation by giving parables which were distinctive to His style. The form was not new to the people, and it did not confuse them, but the unique content left the crowd perplexed. The culture had prepared them for the form, but not the message.

With the Parable growing out of the Palestinian agrarian context, a better understanding of the contemporary farming methods assist in understanding it more precisely. Some interpreters seek to read the intention of the Sower into the text by appealing to the method of plowing and sowing. The order of plowing and sowing proves nothing in the interpretation of this parable because there are two planting

¹Ibid., p. 106.

²A. B. Bruce, "The Synoptic Gospels," in vol. 1 of the Expositor's Greek Testament, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d.), pp. 596-7.

³Goldsmith, "A Methodology," p. 80.

seasons in Palestine. In the spring, the soil is plowed after the sowing while in the fall there is no plowing at all.¹ Since neither season is pointed out, no defense can be made from either one. It is also helpful to note that two methods of sowing the seed were prevalent in that day. The farmer would either throw the seed by hand, or use cattle to carry sacks full of seed and let it fall indiscriminantly out of holes in the sacks as the cattle moved.² The hand-sowing of the farmer seems to fit the description in the parable more closely, but both are possible. In either case, the Sower directly or indirectly sows the seed. It is not possible to draw firm interpretive conclusions from the agricultural context, but it does provide a better understanding of the general picture the original hearers saw as they heard the parable. To suggest that the Sower intentionally or unintentionally sowed the seed in the unfruitful areas would be pure conjecture.

Christ's Purpose in Using Parables

"The Lord had a twofold purpose in the use of parables; namely, both to reveal and to conceal great truths."³

¹Phillip B. Payne, "The Order of Sowing and Ploughing in the Parable of the Sower," New Testament Studies 25 (October 1978):127-128.

²Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, 8th ed., 2 vols. (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1905), I:586.

³Terry, Biblical Hermeneutics, p. 191. Terry notes that the *ὅρα* in Mark 4:21 and Luke 8:10 denotes the final end or purpose of Christ's use of parables, and not merely the result.

The purpose of this concealing is vividly described in Matthew 13:10-15; Mark 4:11-12; and Luke 8:9-10.

It was sometimes his purpose in teaching by parables, to withdraw from certain of his hearers the knowledge of truths which they were unworthy or unfit to receive. If not, where would be the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 6:10?¹

The parabolic method was adopted by Christ in part to veil truth about Himself and His kingdom to the crowd. They had proven themselves to be deaf to His claims and unresponsive to His demands.² Many among the crowds like the Pharisees were undoubtedly "religious," and they used their religiosity as a frontal barrier to Christ's truth. Much like David and Nathan, the parables functioned as vehicles to carry truth past man-made "defense mechanisms."³ When the truth of the parable broke through, varied positive and negative responses were the result, but the truth was conveyed. The former group often failed to even grasp the truth of the parable because of its veiled nature, where the latter group understood the truth, but most often rejected it.

Christ had used parables prior to this time as illustrations, whose meaning was evident from the context in which they were spoken.⁴ From this time on, the unbelieving

¹Trench, Notes on the Parables, p. 7.

²R. V. G. Tasker, The Gospel According to St. Matthew, in the Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. R. V. G. Tasker (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1961), p. 134.

³Stein, The Method and Message, p. 42.

⁴E.g. Matthew 6:24-27.

multitudes were addressed in parables which were interpreted privately for the disciples.¹ The third group, the disciples, were the recipients of the revelatory nature of the very same parables. Apart from the special interpretive revelation by Christ, the disciples would not have understood the true meaning and intent of the parable. This same parable of the Sower which veiled truth about the Kingdom of God to the multitude, was used by Christ to answer the disciples' questions concerning Christ's relationship to the Kingdom.

They, and not they alone, believed that He had come to proclaim and inaugurate the Kingdom of God, as they understood it. Why was it that Christ's announcement of the Kingdom and His teaching of the Word of God had been as ineffective? ²The explanation is given in the parable of the Sower.

Christ's purpose in using parables was multi-faceted, contingent upon the spiritual receptivity of the hearers. The receptive disciples gained a better understanding of the various types of hearers among the multitudes via the parable of the Sower. As exemplified with the disciples, the "ultimate purpose of the parable is thus not to conceal truth but to reveal it"³ (emphasis mine). Parabolic truth remains concealed forever to the unreceptive multitude, but

¹Tasker, St. Matthew, p. 135.

²Oesterley, Gospel Parables, pp. 39-41.

³Robert Alan Cole, The Gospel According to St. Mark, in the Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. R. V. G. Tasker (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1961), p. 93.

true disciples actively seek out the Lord in order to understand that truth. Just Christ alone could interpret the parable; He alone could disclose its truth to true disciples.

Summary

Jesus Christ spoke the Parable of the Sower in an historical setting which functions as its interpretive atmosphere. The Evangelists recorded the parable and its interpretation in the text of their Gospels as it appropriately developed each one's emphasis. Chronological order was of less importance to the Evangelists than theological accuracy and development of thought. This background provides both confidence in the accuracy and validity of the text, and a more thorough understanding of the historical setting.

CHAPTER II

THE HERMENEUTICS OF PARABLES

It is necessary to study the proper hermeneutical basis for interpreting parables in order to discover their valid areas of application, such as in doctrine. The use of an "allegorical" method of interpretation is studied in order to determine valid interpretation and application. This foundational study seeks to reveal both the proper and improper use of what is loosely termed "allegorization."

Defining a Parable

Definition

The term "parable" is an English transliteration from the Greek word παραβολή . The LXX occasionally used it for Hebrew words of comparison and even riddles.¹ Very literally it is translated "to place beside," therefore suggesting its function as an illustration or analogy. "Among the Greeks a parable stood for an argument by analogy."² The comparison or analogy is often drawn from nature or daily life to illuminate a spiritual truth, on the assumption that

¹BAGD, p. 612.

²Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, pp. 177-8.

what is valid in one sphere is valid in the other as well.¹ The delineation of a hard and fast definition of a parable has been difficult to accomplish. The problem is that not every parable is of the same nature. Depending upon the situation, varying degrees of different figures of speech are used in parables. Allegory, simile, proverb, fable and myth can be used in a parable. For example, the difficulty comes in determining the fine line between a parable which includes allegory and an allegory which is not a parable. Trench has been criticized because he does not define a parable but only tells what a parable is not.² But such a treatment is necessary in order to aid in marking off the boundaries of what a parable actually is.

Distinctive Characteristics

It is profitable to do as Trench has done and point out what a parable is not. As a figure of speech, a simile can use anything for comparison, real or imaginary. On the other hand, parables limit themselves to the real.³ Allegories such as Pilgrim's Progress have a counterpart and meaning to each point. Parables essentially have one chief

¹Archibald M. Hunter, Interpreting the Parables (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), p. 8.

²Cf. Goldsmith, "A Methodology," pp. 3-4.

³Terry, Biblical Hermeneutics, p. 188.

point of likeness between the story and the meaning.¹ A myth, on the other hand, is distinct from a parable in that it unconsciously blends the deeper meaning with the outward symbol.²

With these distinctions in mind, the significance of details must be considered. Parables point to one final judgment or application, but that does not deny the fact that several points of contact exist between the parable and the meaning.

"In Nathan's parable, there is obviously a certain connection between the rich man and David, the poor man and Uriah, the ewe-lamb and Bathsheba."³ As long as the parable is not unnaturally shaped to fit the setting of the application, points of contact and similarity can be used with advantage to aid in proper application. Unfortunately, the guiding rule which governs such transference remains as a vague caution against abuse and distortion. The caution must therefore include the aim of understanding the parable in its historical, cultural and linguistic settings as best as possible. Disagreements will continue to exist over how many points of contact exist between parable and application, but it should be agreed upon that they can be plural.

¹Hunter, Interpreting the Parables, p. 10.

²Trench, Notes on the Parables, p. 5.

³A. T. Cadoux, The Parables of Jesus: Their Art and Use (London: James Clarke, n.d.), pp. 50-51.

It is helpful to eliminate some parabolic detail from consideration as points of contact by seeing it as a type of "filler" information. Some detail exists merely to make the picture more realistic. All detail, if it is a valid point of contact or not, serves to convey the central thrust of the parable much like the feathers which wing an arrow.¹ On the other hand, the details of parables should never be ignored. Where in Western thought many truths are conveyed in abstract form, Eastern thought uses the concrete particulars to convey the general truths.² History records a developing understanding of parabolic interpretation, especially concerning the valid and invalid use of particulars in interpretation.

History of Parabolic Interpretation

Scores of men and women have aided in developing our current understanding of parabolic interpretation, but a select few have set the trends which have led us to our position today.

Origen

Origen (186-253 A.D.) succeeded Clement of Alexandria while still a teenager. He had mastered both secular and biblical Greek by this age by the means of a

¹Hunter, Interpreting the Parables, p. 10.

²Bruce, "Synoptic Gospels," p. 199.

brilliant mind and excellent upbringing. His world was flooded by the allegorical method of interpretation which suited the desires of his active mind to find deeper meanings in Scripture.¹ He established five canons for the interpretation of parables, but he departed from his own guidelines on a regular basis.²

Multiplied factors were influential in developing the trend toward allegorization. Jesus' seemingly "mystical" interpretations of the Sower and the Tares contributed to this trend, as well as the tradition of early Church elders who allegorized. Gnostic interpretations came to bear, in addition to the mere fact that allegorical interpretations seemed to be more satisfying and complete.³ The tendency to allow current needs and concerns of the Church to effect interpretation was as real then as it is now.

Origen assimilated these different factors, systematized their thoughts and contents, and gave an air of

¹Goldsmith, "A Methodology," p. 25.

²M. F. Wiles, "Early Exegesis of the Parables," Scottish Journal of Theology 11 (September 1958):288. The five canons included:

1. Likenesses in parables are not intended to be complete in every detail.
2. Parables are not to be used to determine doctrine, but doctrine is to be used as a guide for right interpretation.
3. Take note of the historical context of the parable in the Gospels themselves.
4. Do not be satisfied with surface meaning only; expect to find deeper meaning.
5. Understanding parables cannot be attained except by the help of Christ and the gift of the Spirit of God.

³Ibid., p. 292.

scholarship and respectability to their implementation. The success and pervasiveness of Origen's allegorical method is demonstrated in the fact that allegory dominated ecclesiastical interpretation up to Calvin and Luther, and was revived after them as well.¹

John Chrysostom (347-407 A.D.) proved to be an exception to the spirit of the age by developing a principle of exegesis which attempted to order all the details of the parable to its main emphasis. His insightful principle did not receive extensive consideration until the nineteenth century though.² The principle cause for the longevity of the allegorical method was the growing authority and primacy in interpretation of the Roman Catholic Church. Its authority discouraged probing into new and different hermeneutical methods, and forced scholarly minds to collect, rather than to explore.³

The free thinking of the Renaissance and the religious challenge to Rome's authority by Luther were indicators of a break with traditional systems. John Calvin (1509-1564 A.D.) provided the most dramatic break from the system which had been formalized by Origen more than a millennium earlier. Somewhat similar to Chrysostom's principle, Calvin attempted to order the details to the

¹Stein, The Method and Message, p. 50.

²Goldsmith, "A Methodology," pp. 28-29.

³Ibid., pp. 36-37.

proportion determined by the central theme. No longer would each detail be given equal weight.¹ Unfortunately, two more centuries would pass before serious consideration would be given to any renewed parabolic hermeneutic.

Jülicher

Adolf Jülicher made a dramatic shift from the traditionally encrusted allegorical method of Origen. In 1888, Jülicher swung the hermeneutical pendulum to the opposite extreme by proposing that no allegory was present in parables and that each parable taught only one point.² The drastic extreme to which Jülicher fled was sufficient to stop the use of wholesale allegorization, but he had merely exchanged one distortion for another. The most fundamental basis for this new distortion was a rigid categorization of simile-parable and metaphor-allegory.³ Jülicher started from the Greek concept of parable without considering that the Hebrew word for parable, *מָשָׁל*, includes allegory as well as parable.⁴ Jülicher was just as guilty of ignoring the cultural influences as Origen. The Aristotelian methods for parables had come to function as a straightjacket on Jülicher's hermeneutic.

¹Ibid., p. 42.

²Stein, The Method and Message, p. 50.

³Goldsmith, "A Methodology," p. 54.

⁴Hunter, Parables Then and Now, p. 24.

The greatest contribution of Jülicher to parabolic interpretation was his well-defined position which brought clarity to the discussion by providing a comparison. Origen and Jülicher set the boundaries for interpreting parables, and consequently laid the foundation for a more reasonable mediating position.

Dodd and Jeremias

C. H. Dodd and Joachim Jeremias solidified a mediating position, but retained the ever-present spirit of rationalism in their approach to scriptural authority. As with Jülicher, they too rejected the allegorical method of interpretation, but retained the desire to recover the original parable which was spoken by Jesus. The methodology of form criticism was formally introduced into parabolic interpretation in order to recover the original parables. With an anti-allegorization bias and a pro-rationalistic method of biblical criticism, a new and unique third view was formulated.

Jeremias wanted to recover the significance of parables in their original setting, and as a result, both allegory and moral generalization were avoided.¹ The interpretation of the Parable of the Sower was obviously an allegorical one, and it was consequently rejected by Jeremias

¹William A. Beardslee, "Parable Interpretation and the World Disclosed by the Parable," Perspectives in Religious Studies 3 (Summer 1976):129.

as authentic because it appeared to be a product of the early church.¹

In a similar vein, Dodd placed great significance on the context and setting. The place of the parable in the gospel accounts was considered of little value because the same parable could have been given at different times in different settings.² According to Dodd, parables are to be treated similarly to a piece of art. It has to be understood specifically in its historical situation, therefore excluding any kind of general application. On the other hand, just as any piece of art, it has "significance beyond its original occasion."³ For Dodd, this permitted a "religious value" for parables.

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.⁴

Dodd was critical of Jülicher for his broad moral generalization and application of parables. He helped to bring modern parabolic interpretation to a more thoughtful consideration of the Sitz Im Leben.

Both Dodd and Jeremias have had a negative impact on parabolic thought as well. The goal of discovering the

¹Jeremias, Parables, p. 79.

²C. H. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (London: Nisbet and Company, 1935), p. 26.

³Ibid., p. 195.

⁴Ibid., p. 26.

historical setting of the parable was noble and correct, but it was pursued on the false assumption that it could be found once the additions and changes of the early church were recognized and removed.¹ First century Judaism was accepted as the proper historical situation, and those parts which did not fit the form were rejected as amendments. Building upon the form critical method's distrust of the gospel framework for parables, these two influential scholars went beyond the simple desire to interpret the parables. They went on to seek the Sitz Im Leben of Jesus' life as it is inherently presented in His teachings.² The utter subjectivity of their pursuit was illustrated later in the works of Hans Conzelmann and Willi Marxsen when they claimed that three Sitz Im Leben could be found in Christ's parables.³ Since the time of Dodd and Jeremias, it is sad to say that there has not been a pronounced evangelical response to their form critical method.

Dangers of Extremes

The possible dangers in the use of allegorism are evident in many parabolic interpretations. To suggest that

¹Goldsmith, "A Methodology," p. 59.

²Ibid., pp. 62-63.

³Stein, The Method and Message, p. 54. The three Sitz Im Leben of Marxsen and Conzelmann are:

1. Christ's as He spoke.
2. The early church in the period of oral tradition.
3. The situations of the Evangelists as they wrote.

the four soils in the Parable of the Sower represent the four corners of the world and their different responses to the gospel¹ is to have a purely arbitrary exegesis.² Such abuse does not give reason to prohibit the use of allegory though. It is evident that allegorical elements are found to a greater or lesser degree in most of Christ's recorded parables.³ The danger in an allegorical extreme is the subjectivity of interpretation. This truth is illustrated weekly in the modern church. Many church leaders want to reject all allegorism, but they reveal their own inconsistency by re-employing and reapplying the parables in their pulpits every Sunday.⁴

Jülicher, Dodd and Jeremias gave needed direction to parable interpretation by insisting on understanding them in the light of their historical setting. Their a priori exclusion of allegory was a completely unfounded assumption which obviously ignored the allegorical interpretation by Christ. For some, allegorism is used to distort and misrepresent the parabolic intent, while to others

¹B. E. Thiering, "'Breaking of Bread' and 'Harvest' in Mark's Gospel," Novum Testamentum 12 (January 1970):5.

²Phillip J. Mitchell, "The Interpretation of Parables" (Postgraduate Seminar in Biblical Hermeneutics, Grace Theological Seminary, March, 1976), p. 18.

³Phillip Barton Payne, "The Authenticity of the Parables of Jesus," in Gospel Perspectives: Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels, ed. by R. T. France and David Wenham (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1981), II:334.

⁴Hunter, Interpreting the Parables, p. 19.

allegorism is so objectionable that they would prefer to delete part of the text rather than admit to a genuine allegory in Scripture. Both extremes are dangerous because in them the text of the parable is essentially treated as secondary to the method of interpretation. The desire of the interpreter should be to glean no more and no less from the parable than it genuinely teaches.

Another danger to be avoided is that of uncritically accepting any and all interpretations or methods of interpretation as valid. Tolbert suggests that different interpretations of the same parable are equally valid, with the basic difference being varied presuppositions which affect application.¹ Her analysis of the causes appear to be valid, but the resulting interpretations are not made valid as a consequence. If multiplied interpretations are accepted as genuine, the interpreter has arrived at the same presumptuous conclusion as the allegorist, but by a different route. The answer is not inclusivity, but a better defined hermeneutic.

On the other hand, it is agreed with Bailey that a tightly constructed interlocking system of parabolic interpretation is dangerous and doomed to failure if applied to all parables uniformly.² The diversity and breadth of

¹Mary Ann Tolbert, Perspectives on the Parables (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 30.

²Kenneth Ewing Bailey, Poet and Peasant: A Literary Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), p. 38.

parables must be recognized in any consideration of a hermeneutic for parables.

The Importance of Settings in Hermeneutics

A primary means in attaining an understanding of the genuine teaching of the parable is to study the parable in its historical and cultural settings. The approach is somewhat similar to that of Dodd and Jeremias except for the fact that the Gospel accounts are taken at face value as accurate reports of Christ's own parables and interpretations.

The Historical Setting in Hermeneutics

The parables cannot be seen as simple moral and spiritual truths even when detached from their historical setting. They are a vital part of God's revelation to man through the Person and work of Jesus Christ.¹ Their import must not be minimized by ignoring their Old Testament revelational background. The "Bible" of those who heard Christ speak in parables was our Old Testament. God had already spoken to Israel before Jesus ever opened his mouth to teach.² The Old Testament revelation was the basis for Jesus' New Testament parables.

¹Tasker, St. Matthew, p. 136.

²Birger Girhardsson, "The Seven Parables in Matthew XIII," New Testament Studies 19 (October 1972):37.

The unique character of Jesus' parables in the entire New Testament, excluding the Gospels, is strong evidence that no one in the early church was creating parabolic stories.¹ This historically documented fact is evidence that the early church did not add the interpretation to the Parable of the Sower. The Jewish rabbis used allegories and parables to aid in their teaching, but Jesus gave new and meaningful content to the form. The people had heard the form before, but Christ's message was arresting. They were not perplexed by the parable, but by its meaning. The spiritual blindness of the people is brought out more vividly in light of the previous revelation in the form of the Old Testament, the parabolic form, and the Person and work of Christ Himself.²

The Cultural Setting in Hermeneutics

An unbalanced emphasis on the theology of Paul in the Church today has led many to believe that all of Scripture uses the same conceptual patterns of thought. In the case of parables, though, their theology is expressed in stories about particular people who lived in a given cultural setting at a specific time in history.³ A sound hermeneutic requires a close adherence between parable inter-

¹Stein, The Method and Message, p. 44.

²The general historical setting is explained further in chapter one in the "Settings of the Parable."

³Bailey, Poet and Peasant, p. 27.

pretation and its cultural distinctives. This principle is needed to an even greater extent in those parables which are not interpreted in Scripture. In interpretation, if several senses are possible, it is best to take the one most level to the apprehension of the listeners. Similarly, the literal-external sense must be accepted before the mystical-internal.¹ Any objective hermeneutic would require these principles, therefore requiring a knowledge of the culture.

Some, out of a desire to deny a truth taught in a parable may claim that they are merely fanciful stories which are not based on any reality.² On the contrary, Jesus' parables used realities such as a sower, fig tree, vines, and a prodigal son to illustrate what could not be seen with the physical eye. "A parable must give a true picture of the things it illustrates if it is to be of any service."³ If genuine realities are used, great benefit can come hermeneutically if they are understood. For example, the jubilation of the prodigal son's father is better understood when it is realized that gentlemen in the

¹Thomas Hartwell Horne, An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, 8th ed., 4 vols. (London: T. Cadell, 1839; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), 2:478.

²For example, some deny the reality of Hell because it is vividly described in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16.

³Lorraine Boettner, Immortality (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1956), p. 113.

Near East walk everywhere to show their position and place of honor. This father ran to see his returning son.¹ The tendency today is to either universalize or existentialize the interpretation of parables.² These errors can be avoided by using the standard critical tools of Western scholarship in combination with cultural insights gained from ancient literature, contemporary Near Eastern peasants, and Oriental versions of the Gospels.³ If nothing else, such a study would tear the interpreter away from interpreting the text from the basis of his culture alone.

Proposed Method of Interpretation

In light of the preceding discussion, some general principles of parabolic interpretation can be suggested.

¹Kenneth E. Bailey, Through Peasant Eyes (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), p. XV.

²Bailey, Poet and Peasant, pp. 28-29. Bailey suggests that there has historically been five ways of interpreting parables:

1. Allegorize--no cultural significance.
2. Indigenize--unconsciously read our culture into the original culture when the parable is given.
3. Universalize--all things mean the same thing to all people.
4. Existentialize--what does it mean now (without reference to the historical event and its historical meaning)?
5. Despair--impossible to recover the original culture and meaning.

³*Ibid.*, p. 30. The Oriental Versions of the Gospels refer to the Syriac and Arabic translations of the Greek. They provide insight into different interpretations from a drastically different culture and time period (second or third century A.D.).

Methodology

The additional insights provided by historical, cultural and textual studies have been shown to be of great value and will not be elaborated. Even for those who do not use such studies, they would agree that they are valuable. But it is obvious that disagreement still exists about the extent of allegory used with parabolic detail. It is sufficient to say that parables emphasize one significant thought while also teaching other truths as that thought is presented.¹ These truths help to convey the significant thought, and they are of less importance, but only in the context of the particular parable.

Allegory cannot be eliminated on a wholesale basis any more than a completely literal hermeneutic can be accepted. The Parable of the Sower uses symbols just as Nathan used symbols to reprove David for his sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam 12:1-6). Nathan used three symbols to represent three different people, for the ultimate purpose of confronting David with his sin. As with David, the original audience which hears the parable can instinctively identify the symbols. Interpreters today are not free to make other identifications. "The symbols to look for are the ones the

¹Eta Linneman, Jesus of the Parables, trans. by John Sturdy (New York: Harper, 1966), p. 23.

original teller puts in the story for the purpose of communicating with the original audience."¹

Parabolic interpretation should include the following avenues of pursuit:

1. Identification of symbols which were identifiable to the original listeners.²
2. Identify the Sitz Im Leben of Jesus and the Evangelists.³
 - a. Determine the audience, e.g., Pharisees, crowds, disciples.
 - b. Discern the cultural presuppositions of the story.⁴
 - c. If possible, note the reason which prompted Jesus to employ the parable.⁵
3. Determine what response or decision the original audience is pressed to make.⁶
4. Interpret the several parts with reference to the general scope and design of the whole.⁷

¹Bailey, Through Peasant Eyes, p. XXI. The comparison is made with a modern political cartoon. The cartoonist uses symbols that the majority of his readers will interpret correctly.

²Bailey, Poet and Peasant, p. 40.

³Hunter, Interpreting the Parables, p. 100.

⁴Bailey, Through Peasant Eyes, pp. XXII-XXIII.

⁵A. Berkely Mickelsen, Interpreting the Bible (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), p. 229.

⁶Bailey, Through Peasant Eyes, p. XXIII.

⁷Terry, Biblical Hermeneutics, p. 194.

Doctrinal Use of Parables

A universal hermeneutical principle requires that the teachings of Scripture be understood from the literal to the figurative, the clearer to the more obscure.¹ The nature of parables as figures of speech immediately places them in the figurative, more obscure category. Consequently, "it is never safe to use a type or parable to teach something not elsewhere taught directly and clearly in the Word of God."²

This does not render parables to a position of theological non-use. Christ used parables to teach great theological and ethical truths, and the interpreter today can do the same by carefully safeguarding "the rules under which this type of material can be safely conducted."³ In glean- ing our doctrine from the parables, we must be careful in our interpretation, constantly checking our results with the plain teachings of the whole counsel of God as found in the Bible.⁴ The presence of parables in Scripture demands their use, and the position of interpreters in history demands their caution.

¹Trench, Notes on the Parables, p. 17.

²Alva J. McClain, The Greatness of the Kingdom (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959), p. 324.

³Geerhardus Vos, Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948), p. 378.

⁴Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, p. 285.

Ethical Use of Parables

Some may deny any application of the parable to a believer today because the Matthean text calls the seed the "Word of the Kingdom." The parallel accounts reveal that the seed is not only applicable to a Jewish dispensation, but is transdispensational. In Mark, the seed is the Word, and in Luke it is called the Word of God.¹

Assuming that the interpretation of the parable in the text was from Christ and not the early Church, it is evident that Christ used the parable to challenge the people morally and ethically to examine their hearts. From the very start, Christ identifies the soils with hearts of men.² The eschatological setting of the parable in Matthew is not denied in the interpretation, but it is clearly relegated to a secondary position. Christ's interpretation emphasizes the manner of entrance into the kingdom, instead of the nature or chronology of the kingdom. The ethical sense complements the total understanding of the kingdom, and interpreters today may glean ethical applications to function in a like manner.³

Some who presuppose that the interpretation was an early Church addition, use that belief as license to give

¹Habershon, The Study of the Parables, p. 280.

²Archibald T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, vol. 1 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930), p. 106.

³Gerhardsson, "The Parable of the Sower and Its Interpretation," p. 166.

a modern interpretation which meets the current spiritual needs of the Church.¹ Building on their presupposition, they state that "from the beginning the Church felt free to adapt Jesus' words to its own practical situations and problems in the present."² In order to avoid this error of manipulation and reinterpretation, an even greater emphasis must be placed upon the original Sitz Im Leben. Proper ethical application will be secured more frequently as a result of adherence to this principle. Otherwise, the fine line between reinterpretation and application will be crossed.

Jesus' parables were simple, yet very profound. They were simple, but difficult to understand because their simplicity made more demands on spiritual insight and readiness to repent than most people were prepared to face.³ The ethical and moral use of parables is obviously revealed in the varied personal responses by a wide ranging audience.

Summary

The exegesis of parables has been plagued by the interpreter's contemporary theological concerns throughout Church history.⁴ Fortunately, the Parable of the Sower

¹Neil, "Expounding the Parables," p. 76.

²Hugh Anderson, "The Gospel of Mark," New Century Bible, ed. Ronald E. Clements and Matthew Black (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1976), pp. 134-5.

³Tinsley, "Luke," p. 85.

⁴Goldsmith, "A Methodology," p. 13.

deals with subject matter which is always contemporary. The manipulations of allegorists, literalists, form critics and hermeneutical specialists cannot alter the primary message that the Word of God experiences different degrees of acceptance and rejection in the world each day.

CHAPTER III

THE "WAYSIDE" SOIL

Significant Phraseology

Only Matthew records the significant phrase μὴ συνιέντος (13:19).¹ It vividly describes the total unreceptivity of this soil because of its inability to understand. The evil one who snatches away the seed is uniquely described by equating ὁ Σατανᾶς (Mk 4:15), ὁ διάβολος (Lk 8:12), and ὁ πονηρὸς (Matt 13:19). His habitual practice of snatching away the seed is described by two present indicative verbs, ἁρπάζει (Matt 13:19) and αἶρει (Lk 8:12). Both words suggest a taking away, tearing out or raising out.² Only Luke records the final purpose clause,³ ἵνα μὴ πλιστεύσαντες σωθῶσιν (8:12).

Interpretations

Exceptional Interpretations

Jeremias' eschatological bent led him to interpret the first seed and soil as a picture of Christ's perseverance in sowing the seed despite hostility, desertions,

¹See Appendix.

²BAGD, pp. 24, 109.

³H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1946), p. 283.

ineffective preaching, and more. The Sower perseveres, knowing that some day, eschatologically, his labors will be rewarded.¹ Forbes states that these mysteries "do not pertain to any so-called sphere of Christian profession."² Both of these interpretations seem to ignore the final purpose clause recorded in Luke 8:12. This clause, as well as the immediate context, place the parable in a contemporary soteriological setting.

The Customary Interpretation

Interpreters who begin with different presuppositions and finish with different applications meet in the middle by interpreting the parable similarly. Schweizer³ and Ladd⁴ are two such examples. They agree that the wayside soil represents unregenerate and unresponsive hearers of the Word of God. To be more specific, the seed is equally good in all four soils, but its germination and fruit-bearing are dependent on the type of soil it falls. It is intended to leave the listener asking, "What kind of soil am I?"⁵

¹Jeremias, Parables of Jesus, p. 151.

²Forbes, "Interpretation of Matthew 13," p. 36.

³Eduard Schweizer, "From the New Testament Text to the Sermon," trans. James W. Cox, Review and Expositor 72 (Spring 1975):185.

⁴George Eldon Ladd, Crucial Questions About the Kingdom of God (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1952), p. 128.

⁵Hunter, Interpreting the Parables, p. 47.

Significance in the Whole Parable

The wayside soil illustrates that men can and do reject the Kingdom of God.¹ The need for prior preparation of the soil is implied, even if the Palestinian farmer intended to plow after sowing. This soil provides a sharp contrast to the fruit-bearing soil. The latter promotes growth and maturity, whereas the former does not recognize himself as standing in any relation to the Word and the grace it proclaims. All that speaks of sin, redemption, and holiness is unintelligible, and wholly without significance, because he "understandeth it not."²

¹Tasker, "Matthew," p. 137.

²Trench, Notes on the Parables, p. 30.

CHAPTER IV

THE ROCKY SOIL

Significant Phraseology

The "rocky places" pictured here are genuinely Palestinian. The seed is not cast callously onto a rock pile, but is thrown on a thin covering of soil which hides the underlying limestone rock. Enough soil is present to produce a sickly sprout, but not enough to nourish roots and fruit.¹ This background is understood better when considering that the rocky soil in Mark 4:16 is placed in the same general category as the "wayside" soil of verse 15 through the use of ὁμοίως (4:16). If the first soil represents an unbeliever, the second soil pictures one too. The superficial joy and excitability which gave the second soil a quick reception, will cast the seed away when trials come.²

Matthew records οὐκ ἔχει δὲ ῥίζαν ἐν ἑαυτῷ (13:21), as do Mark and Luke in describing the present condition of this seed. The imagery of the root is not an infrequent one in Scripture.³ Ephesians 3:17 and Colossians 2:7 both picture

¹Oesterley, Gospel Parables, p. 44.

²Alexander Maclaren, "The Gospel According to St. Matthew," Chapters IX to XVII, Exposition of Holy Scripture (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, n.d.), p. 206.

³Trench, Notes on the Parables, p. 31.

rooting in direct relationship to being "in Christ." The original hearers of the parable would simply understand the description as a picture of a person with shallow, unstable faith. The disciples would be able to readily comprehend the meaning of this phrase when they would see the mass "desertions" of Christ at His crucifixion. Multitudes looked to Christ for a mere political deliverance, and when that hope was dashed, their shallow instability shown through. Their enthusiasm had endured but a short time.¹

The temporary faith of the second soil culminates in a "falling away" which is described by two complementary words. Matthew and Mark use σκανδαλίζομαι (Matt 13:21; Mk 4:17) to picture a "stumbling," but Luke completes the picture by using ἀφίστανται (8:13). The Revised Version translation of ἀφίστανται as "stumbleth" is misleading. It literally means to "fall away" or "become apostate."² The afflictions which cause true believers to grow are cause for this soil to immediately (εὐθύς--Matt 13:21 and Mk 4:17) stumble and fall away (Luke).

Interpretations

Divergent Interpretations

The various divergent interpretations have the common characteristic of taking πιστεύουσιν in Luke 8:13 as saving

¹Oesterley, Gospel Parables, p. 46.

²BAGD, pp. 126-7.

faith. Shank sees it as saving faith because the final purpose clause in verse 12 uses the same root word in participial form in a salvation context. He claims that it would be prejudiced exegesis to assign a different meaning to πιστεύω in verse 13. His theological system then dictates that "their subsequent fall does not obviate the fact that their believing, while it continued, was actual saving faith."¹

According to this view, the doctrine known as "eternal security" or positional salvation are denied in this verse.² Mere unbelief is present in Luke 8:12, but Luke 8:13 describes apostasy. Ἀφίστανται (Lk 8:13) is defined as the action where one has severed his saving union and relationship with Christ. It is concluded that apostasy is impossible for men who have not entered into a saving relationship with God.³

A mediating view sees the belief as saving faith, but the apostasy as not breaking the salvation bond. The thin, shallow soil and the joyous reception of the seed describes emotional enthusiasm, but also the failure to put down roots in deep repentance. Consequently, the second soil portrays a Christian who lives a "thin life."⁴ Some proclaim that

¹Robert Shank, Life in the Son (Springfield, Missouri: Westcott Publishers, 1960), pp. 32-33.

²A. Elwood Sanner, "Mark," Beacon Bible Commentary (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1964), p. 301.

³Shank, Life in the Son, p. 158.

⁴Ralph Earle, "Matthew," Beacon Bible Commentary (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1964), p. 133.

God's gift of salvation endures even when man's faith does not. The seeming discrepancy between belief and apostasy qualifies the salvation of the second soil as one of the "mysteries" of the kingdom of God!¹

The Preferred Interpretation

The text is explicit in pointing out that the second soil portrays an unbeliever. No mention at all is made about fruit-bearing, implying similarity with the first soil. The third soil at least mentions fruit. The use of ὁμοίως in Mark 4:16 also links the first and second soils. As will be explained later, the sharp linguistic contrast between the fourth soil and the first three soils suggests a very pronounced distinction between them. Πιστεύουσιν in Luke 8:13 does not stand alone; only a temporary faith is described by the phrase, οἱ πρὸς καιρὸν πιστεύουσιν (Lk 8:13). The honor which the second soil gives to the Gospel resembles faith,² but is very likely to be unbelieving "faith."³ They are not truly regenerated by the incorruptible seed which never fade-th (1 Pet 1:4).

¹ Zane Clark Hodges, The Hungry Inherit (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), p. 62.

² John Calvin, Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists: Matthew, Mark and Luke, trans. William Pringle (reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), p. 115.

³ James 2:14,19; John 2:23-25; John 6:64,66; Acts 8:16. Cf. James E. Rosscup, "Exegesis of Matthew 13" (mimeographed class syllabus, Grace Theological Seminary, 1981), p. 12.

Summary

The second soil has its place in the parable to show that genuine distinctions exist between the unbelieving first soil and those who give some reverence for the Word of God. They believe in some manner, contrary to the first soil, yet their belief is not enduring, saving faith.¹

¹Calvin, Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, p. 115.

CHAPTER V

THE THORNY SOIL

Significant Phraseology

The soil described here is covered by a thorn plant (ἀκάνθας, Matt 13:22; Mk 4:18; Lk 8:14). The participles used by the evangelists indicate an inadvertent sowing of the seed on the soil.¹ The earth may have been good, but the presence of thorns is the first indication in this parable of the need for preparation.² The fourth soil is called the good soil because it was prepared to receive and "understand" when the seed was sown.

The thorns are described as the cares of this age, the deceitfulness of riches (Mk 4:19), and the pleasures of life (Lk 8:14). The whole gamut of Palestinian society is covered in this phrase. The peasants, beggars and slaves had many cares and worries in simply maintaining daily existence. The rich had the constant temptation of money, but the Lord recognized that temptation was found in poverty as

¹Matthew uses the aorist passive participle and Mark uses the present passive participle form of σπείρω to indicate an inadvertent falling or sowing. Luke is more explicit by using the aorist active participle of πίπτω to describe the action.

²Trench, Notes on the Parables, p. 31.

well as in wealth.¹ The thorns which characterize this soil are typical of the unbeliever's lifestyle described elsewhere in Scripture.² The Bible is bold in repeating that thorns of this nature are not characteristic of the Christian's life.

These thorns are not merely the outward things, but the attitude toward them.³ The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches work to choke the seed continuously (συνπνίγει, Matt 13:22). The result of the choking is described by Luke through the unique form, τελεσφοροῦσιν (8:14). It bridges the simile between the plant and the human being. The same root used in Luke 8:14 for plants is used in the LXX (4 Macc 13:20) for women bearing offspring.⁴ This soil, representing a human being, does not produce any such offspring. Matthew 13:22 and Mark 4:19 complement the description by adding ἀκαρπός γίνεται. Contrary to the impression of English translations, this phrase does not suggest that fruit was once there and later dwindled. "As Mark 4:7 shows, the person became unfruitful from the outset, i.e., yielded no fruit."⁵

¹Oesterley, Gospel Parables, pp. 48-49.

²Rosscup, "Exegesis of Matthew 13," p. 11. Cf. Titus 3:3; James 4:1-3.

³Maclaren, "St. Matthew," p. 208.

⁴G. Abbott-Smith, A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1937), pp. 442-43.

⁵Rosscup, "Exegesis of Matthew 13," p. 11.

Divergent Interpretations

The customary Arminian interpretation sees genuine salvation initially, but the choking thorns cause either spiritual retardation or even spiritual death. According to this view, the Christian's life becomes "overcrowded with things until God-consciousness is choked out."¹

A more inconsistent view, which mediates between Arminian and Calvinistic interpretations, posits that the seed grew some, but was choked and stymied. No room was given for spiritual growth, consequently spiritual maturity was not attained and they remained spiritual pygmies.² Both of these views appear to ignore the text of Mark 4:7 which indicates that no fruit was produced. This soil is said only to "hear" (Matt 13:22), which is no more than the first soil which is unsaved.³

The Preferred Interpretation

The second soil dealt with the blatant comparison of life and death. This soil is used by Christ to compare life with fruitful, mature life.⁴ Maclaren states that the simultaneous growth of the thorns and the seed are a parallel

¹Earle, "Matthew," p. 133.

²Hodges, The Hungry Inherit, p. 63; cf. Maclaren, "St. Matthew," p. 208.

³Rosscup, "Exegesis of Matthew 13," p. 12.

⁴Goldsmith, "A Methodology," p. 140.

to the double-minded man of James 1.¹ The parallel is apparent, but not real. James refers to the double-minded man as "brother," but the parable of the sower does not even suggest that some fruit developed to indicate a believer is represented.

The thorny ground hearer may not even realize his unfruitful state. He may often keep up a profession of Christianity based on a "decision." This soil is included as a part of the whole parable to acknowledge this type of hearer, and instruct him that fruit-bearing is not optional to genuine Christianity. Through this soil, Jesus taught that the doctrines of justification and sanctification are inextricably bound together, and cannot be separated. The fourth soil completes and solidifies the teaching of this central truth of the parable.

¹Maclaren, "St. Matthew," p. 207.

CHAPTER VI

THE GOOD SOIL

The Import of the Words of Acceptance

All three evangelists recorded a sharp distinction between the first three soils and the fourth soil. The distinction is made through the use of three different words which express acceptance and comprehension. Plummer notes that all three words are equivalents of the Aramaic root "to take in."¹

Matthew - συνιέναι

This term very literally means to set or join together in the mind.² That which is joined together, or understood is in the accusative case, here being τὸν λόγον (13:23). The same root word, συνίημι (13:23), was used by Matthew in 13:13-15 as he recorded Christ's defense for using parables. In this passage, Christ briefly summarizes Isaiah 6:9-10, and then concludes His defense by repeating

¹Alfred Plummer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke, ICC (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), p. 222.

²Joseph Henry Thayer, trans., Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), p. 605.

the Isaiah passage according to the wording of the LXX.¹ συνίημι has a place of great prominence in Matthew's record as he either pens or quotes it in 13:13,14,15,23.

Figuratively, the range of meaning for the verb συνίημι indicates perception, then taking note of, and finally grasping, in the sense of understanding.² Matthew 13:23 does not limit its usage to a mere intellectual understanding though. The parabolic context of its use indicates that it is being used in an ethical-moral sense. "Biblical usage does not regard 'understanding' as a purely intellectual process, but rather as the action of the whole moral and spiritual nature."³

Matthew clearly compares the unbelieving multitudes who do not understand (Matt 13:13) with the believing, fruit-bearing soil which does understand (Matt 13:23). The comparison is accentuated in 13:23 with the addition of δῆ. There is no doubt about the genuineness or reality of the fruit produced by the good soil. The δῆ further sets off the fourth soil from the rest in Matthew's account, and provides it with a climactic emphasis.⁴

¹TDNT, s.v. "συνίημι," by Hans Conzelmann, 7:894.

²NIDNT, s.v. "σύνεσις," by J. Goetzmann, 3:130.

³Maclaren, "St. Matthew," p. 209.

⁴A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), p. 1149.

Mark - παραδέχονται

Mark adds a new perspective to the unique character of the fourth soil. When παραδέχονται (4:20) is used with objects, such as τὸν λόγον (4:20), it means to accept, acknowledge (as correct),¹ or take upon one's self.² The LXX translates פָּדָל into παραδέχεται in Proverbs 3:12.³ The NIV translation renders it "the son he delights in." Although παραδέχομαι is used with a person in Proverbs 3:12, the depth of the reception is vividly illustrated there. Mark therefore describes a reception in the fourth soil which is deep and heartfelt. The author of Hebrews also paraphrases the LXX translation of Proverbs 3:11-12.⁴ The certainty of παραδέχομαι is illustrated in Hebrews 12:6 through the parallel of God's acceptance of believers as sons. No greater parallel could be used to describe the complete acceptance of the object of παραδέχομαι.

Luke - Κατέχουσιν

Luke also emphasizes the firm, unrelenting grasp of the fourth soil. Κατέχω means to hold fast, keep secure, or to keep firm possession of."⁵ As in Matthew and Mark, it

¹BAGD, p. 614.

²Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon, p. 480.

³The NIV Triglot Old Testament, with an introduction by John R. Kohlenberger III (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981).

⁴Abbott-Smith, A Manual Greek Lexicon, p. 339.

⁵Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon, p. 340.

is τὸν λόγον which is possessed. As surely as the unbelieving world suppresses (κατεχόντων) the truth of God in creation for evil (Rom 1:18), the good soil holds fast to the Word of God for fruitbearing.¹

Christian Bugge properly summarizes the united witness of these words in the Synoptic accounts:

The word is understood (συνιείς , Matt), i.e. heart, disposition, mind have been opened out to the truth; they have accepted the word (παραδέχονται , Mark), i.e., unlike the superficial hearers, the word has been absorbed; and they have held fast (κατέχουσιν , Luke) the word, so that the seed bears fruit (καρποφοροῦσιν), and in this fruitfulness the hearers show their steadfastness, and are able to continue, ever bringing forth new fruit (ἐν ὑπομονῇ).²

The Necessity of Fruitbearing

Matthew uses δὴ (13:23) to emphasize the distinctive fruitbearing result of the seed on the good soil. The special character of the good soil requires the bearing of fruit to some degree. Without lasting fruit, the good soil would ultimately be no different than the rocky or thorny soils.

The Need for Preparation

The good soil was not trodden down as the first, nor was it a shallow covering over limestone rock as the second,

¹NIDNT, s.v. "ἀλήθεια ," by A. C. Thiselton, 3:885.

²Christian A. Bugge, Die-Haupt-Parabeln Jesu, p. 119, translated and cited by W. O. E. Oesterley, The Gospel Parables in the Light of Their Jewish Background (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1936), p. 50.

nor was it burdened down and choked by thorns. "It had received special care and attention previously in tilling it and removing the hindrances to normal growth."¹ The inferred spiritual parallel is obvious. It is only that soil which has been prepared by the Sower which is able to produce fruit. Only that hearer of the Word of God whose heart has been "furrowed" by the convicting work of the Holy Spirit is able to receive, understand, and hold fast to that Word. It is only after such preparation and reception that Christian fruit can be produced.

The Need for Consistent Fruitbearing

Matthew is very expressive as he reaches the climax of the parable. The use of ὅς δὲ (13:23) emphasizes one "who really bears fruit."² Luke adds to Matthew's emphasis by stressing the perpetuity (ἐν ὑπομονῇ, 8:15) of the fruitbearing. Luke describes endurance and perseverance with these words, rather than "patience."³ Even if τελεσφοροῦσιν (Lk 8:14) and ἀκαρπός (Matt 13:22; Mk 4:19) in the thorny soil is taken to indicate fruit which later dwindles, ἐν ὑπομονῇ (Lk 8:15) sets the good soil off quite distinctly. Even Arminian theologians such as Shank and

¹Ardel B. Caneday, "The Parable of the Sower: An Illustration of Preparedness for Receiving the Word of God" (Postgraduate Seminar on the Teachings of Jesus, Grace Theological Seminary, Fall, 1976), p. 16.

²Dana and Mantey, A Manual Grammar, p. 261.

³Plummer, St. Luke, p. 222.

Adeney recognize the importance of ὑπομονή by calling it the "keynote of the parable."¹ Arminian or Calvinist, perseverance in good works is expected of the true believer. It must be noted that these works, or "fruits," are not man-made devices, but the fruit of the Spirit² manifested in attitude and action. Consistent fruitbearing is the only evidence of hearing the word rightly.³ "I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit" (Jn 15:16).⁴

The Validity of Degrees of Fruitbearing

All three synoptic evangelists record the different degrees of fruitfulness from the fourth soil. The description is similar to the scheme of the vine and the branches in John 15: i.e., fruit, v. 2; more fruit, v. 2; much fruit, v. 5 (KJV).⁵

The first three classes have no fruit and so show that they are unfruitful soil, unsaved souls and lives. There is variety in those who do bear fruit, but they have some fruit.⁶

¹Shank, Life in the Son, p. 33.

²Galatians 5:22-23.

³John Charles Ryle, Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1951), p. 144. Cf. Matthew 3:7-10.

⁴The New Testament distinguishes those who endure only for a while from those who continue. See John 6:66; Hebrews 10:39; 1 John 2:19.

⁵Rosscup, "Exegesis of Matthew 13," p. 11.

⁶Robertson, Word Pictures, I:107.

The understanding and insights of different commentators are found to be very profitable in conclusion:

What the parable and its exposition describe is the FINAL FATE of the Word in the hearts of men. When life is done, some show a harvest, grains running from 30 to 100; all the rest show none. This FINAL fate of the Word is shown us NOW, so that we may examine ourselves as to how we are treating the Word NOW, before life is done.¹

Fruitfulness is the aim of the sower, and the test of the reception of the seed. If there is not fruit, manifestly there has been no real understanding of the word. A touchstone, that, which will produce surprising results in detecting spurious Christianity, if it is honestly applied!

There is variety in the degree of fruitfulness, according to the goodness of the soil; that is to say, according to the thoroughness and depth of the reception of the word.²

The degrees of fruitfulness add to the difficulty in practically discerning the spiritual state of a person. A true believer may evidence only a small degree of fruitfulness, while an impulsive "rocky soil" unbeliever may evidence a great measure of apparent fruitfulness. The only human way of discerning between the two is in the permanence and perseverance of the fruitfulness. Only the true Christian will persevere in the expression of the fruit of the Spirit, no matter how small or great the degree.

Summary

As the disciples heard the words of fruitfulness being spoken, they were given an objective illustration to

¹R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943), p. 523.

²Maclaren, "St. Matthew," p. 210.

compare and apply to themselves.¹ They knew that the good soil hearer was unique because he accepted, understood, and held fast to the Word of God. No doubt would be left in the observer's mind that fruit was evident in the true believer's life. These disciples knew that true disciples are set apart by their perseverance in good works.

¹Caneday, "The Parable of the Sower," p. 17.

CONCLUSION

Despite the arguments of numerous critics, both the parable and its interpretations are accepted as being from Christ Himself. Parabolic interpretation has experienced an evolution throughout history, and continues to evolve. A vital element to the proper interpretation of Jesus' parables is the understanding of the contemporary culture and setting. Form and redaction criticism have exerted a large amount of negative influence on the evolution of parabolic interpretation. On the other hand, it has provided a renewed, positive emphasis on interpreting parables in light of their original Sitz Im Leben.

The Matthean Sitz Im Leben of the Parable of the Sower finds Jesus at a turning point in His earthly ministry. Israel is rejecting her Messiah, and Christ begins to prepare His disciples for the coming age. In parabolic form, Jesus describes the types of reception the Word of God will receive. Many are totally unprepared to understand or accept it, some impulsively respond for a season, while others are pre-occupied with encumbrances. A certain number will respond with genuine faith, and it will be visibly evidenced, in varying degrees. Only this number will accept, understand and hold fast to the Word of God. Matthew 7:20 summarizes

the central teaching of the Parable of the Sower for believers and unbelievers alike: "By their fruits ye shall know them."

APPENDIX

VARIATIONS AND SIMILARITIES IN THE SYNOPTIC ACCOUNTS

Matthew 13:18-23

Mark 4:13-20

Luke 8:11-15

18.	παραβολὴν	13.	παραβολὴν	11.	παραβολή
18.	σπεύραντος	14.	οὐ σπεύρων	11.	οὐ σπόρος
				11.	ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ--geni-
					tive of source
				12.	παρὰ τὴν ὁδόν
19.	παντὸς ἀκούοντος τὸν λόγον	15.	παρὰ τὴν ὁδόν		
	τῆς βασιλείας	15.	ὅπου σπεύρεται ὁ λόγος--Present		
19.	μὴ συνίεντος		Passive Indicative		
19.	ἔρχεται	15.	ὅταν ἀκούσων--Aorist Subjunc-	12.	οἱ ἀκούσαντες
19.	ὁ πονηρὸς		tive		
19.	ἀρπάζει--Present Indicative			12.	εἴτα ἔρχεται
19.	τὸ ἐσπαρμένον ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ	15.	ἐνθὺς ἔρχεται	12.	ὁ διάβολος
	αὐτοῦ		ὁ Σατανᾶς	12.	αἴρει
			τὸν λόγον τὸν ἐσπαρμένον εἰς	12.	τὸν λόγον ἀπὸ τῆς καρδίας
			αὐτοῦς		αὐτῶν
19.	οὗτος ἐστὶν ὁ παρὰ τὴν ὁδόν			12.	ἵνα μὴ πιστεῦσαντες
	σπαρεῖς				σωθῶσιν
20.	ἐπὶ τὰ πετρώδη σπαρεῖς	16.	οὗτοι εἰσιν ὁμοίως		
20.	λαμβάνων αὐτόν	16.	ἐπὶ τὰ πετρώδη σπειρόμενοι	13.	ἐπὶ τῆς πέτρας
21.	ρίζαν ἐν ἑαυτῷ	16.	λαμβάνουσιν αὐτόν	13.	δέχονται τὸν λόγον
21.	ἀλλὰ πρόσκαιρός ἐστιν	17.	ρίζαν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς	13.	ρίζαν
21.	γενομένης δὲ θλίψεως	17.	ἀλλὰ προσκαιροῖ εἰσιν	13.	οἱ πρὸς καιρὸν πιστεύουσιν
21.	ἡ διωγμοῦ διὰ τὸν λόγον	17.	εἴτα γενομένης θλίψεως	13.	καὶ ἐν καιρῷ πειρασμοῦ
21.	εὐθὺς σκανδαλίζεται	17.	ἡ διωγμοῦ διὰ τὸν λόγον		
22.	σπαρεῖς	17.	εὐθὺς σκανδαλίζονται	13.	ἀφίστανται
		18.	σπειρόμενοι	14.	πесόν

Matthew 13:18-23

Mark 4:13-20

Luke 8:11-15

- | | | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------|-----|--------------------------------|-----|------------------------|
| 22. | μέριμνα τοῦ αἰῶνος | 19. | μέριμναι τοῦ αἰῶνος | 14. | ὕπὸ μεριμνῶν |
| 22. | ἀπάτη τοῦ πλοῦτου | 19. | ἀπάτη τοῦ πλοῦτου | 14. | πλοῦτου |
| | | 19. | λοιπὰ ἐπιθυμίαι κειτορευόμεναι | 14. | ἡδονῶν τοῦ βίου |
| 22. | δικαριος γίνεται | 19. | δικαριος γίνεται | 14. | πορευόμενοι |
| | | | | 14. | οὐ τελεσφοροῦσιν-- |
| 23. | ἀκούων | 20. | ἀκούουσιν | | Harax Legomenon |
| 23. | συνιείς | 20. | παραδέχονται | 15. | οὐτοί εἰσιν οἵτινες ἐν |
| 23. | ὅς δὴ καρποφορεῖ καὶ ποιεῖ | 20. | καρποφοροῦσιν | | καρδίᾳ καλῇ καὶ ἀγαθῇ |
| 23. | ἐκατον, ἐξήκοντα, τριάκοντα | 20. | τριάκοντα, ἐξήκοντα, ἐκατόν | 15. | ἀκούσαντες |
| | | | | 15. | κατέχουσιν |
| | | | | 15. | καρποφοροῦσιν |
| | | | | 15. | ἐν ὑπομονῇ |

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