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Is Christ the Son in the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen

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IS CHRIST THE SON IN THE
PARABLE OF THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN?

A Research Elective
Concordia Seminary
Exegetical Department

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

Is Christ the son in the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen? The Church would consider this question a valid one during any period of her history, because she has always associated the interpretation of parables with the content of her faith. But a question of this nature demands more careful consideration in the age of Biblical criticism, because it must be considered from several viewpoints. One hundred and fifty years ago, our question could have been viewed from this perspective: Did Jesus refer to Himself as the son in the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen as it is recorded in Holy Scriptures? Today, on the basis of Synoptic studies and research on the parables, we must look at this question from at least four perspectives:

1. How does the writer of Matthew interpret the son in this parable?
2. How does Mark interpret the son?
3. How does Luke interpret the son?
4. What did Jesus intend when He originally told the parable to a Palestinian audience?

In order to answer the original question, it is

essential to understand the parable as a literary form, and it is also necessary to understand the interpretations of the authors of individual Synoptic Gospels and the needs of the early Christian community to which they addressed themselves.

My interest originated in a homiletical concern. I was torn between preaching the Parable of the Royal Wedding Feast in Matthew as Christ's Kingdom invitation and preaching the details of the parable with God the Father as King and Christ as the King's son. This conflict led me to a consideration of the relationship between Christ and the Father in the parables. In a number of parables, if the details are pressed, the chief figure (the king, the householder, the father) could be interpreted as the Father. In other instances, a case could be made for considering Christ the chief figure (the sower, the householder, the shepherd). For the purposes of this study, it was clear that I would have to limit myself to selected parables. When I realized that a solution to the problem of the relationship between Christ and the Father was intimately tied up with the whole question of form criticism in the Gospels, I decided to limit my investigation to a single parable which is treated by all three Synoptics and which at the same time raises

the question of christological interpretation. The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen is uniquely fitted for this investigation. As we concentrate on the question based on this parable, it should be clear that the larger problem of parabolic interpretation in the light of form criticism lies in the background.

The Methodology

Before considering at length the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, I will give a brief overview of the interpretation of parables, contrasting the traditional interpretation of parables as represented by Archbishop Richard Trench with the form critical interpretation of parables as represented by C.H. Dodd and Joachim Jeremias. Then, I will examine the synoptic material, looking first at Mark's presentation followed by Matthew and Luke. Finally, on the basis of Jeremias' recasting of the parable in its original setting, I will evaluate the parable as Jesus might have intended it. Throughout this investigation, the problem which gives it shape remains the same: Is Christ the son in the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen?

CHAPTER II

INTERPRETATION OF PARABLES

Traditional Interpretation

Brief History

For the purposes of this broad overview of the history of parabolic interpretation, we will distinguish between traditional and form critical interpretation of parables. The traditional interpretation was used throughout the entire history of the Church up until the last half of the nineteenth century when literary criticism was first applied to the parables. Archibald M. Hunter gives a fine overview of the history of parabolic interpretation in the second chapter of his recent book Interpreting the Parables (1960).¹ The traditional interpretation was shaped by Origen of Alexandria, the greatest Biblical scholar of antiquity, who employed the technique of allegory when dealing with all the parables.² He followed the approach of Philo of Alexandria, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria.³ Hunter defines allegory as "the interpretation of a text in terms of something else, regardless of what that something else may be."⁴ The method is Greek. Origen's interpretation

of the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard will serve as an example:

The first shift of workers signifies the generations from creation to Noah; the second, those from Noah to Abraham; the third, those from Abraham to Moses; the fourth, those from Moses to Joshua; the fifth, those up to the time of Christ. The householder is God, while the penny represents salvation.⁵

With the exception of the Antiochene Fathers, Origen's method prevailed throughout the Middle Ages. Hunter credits Luther and especially Calvin with a fresh exegetical approach to the parables in the Reformation era, but bemoans the fact that their influence in this area waned in the period of orthodoxy. He points out that even Luther and Calvin interpreted the parables according to their doctrinal presuppositions.⁶

In summing up the traditional interpretation of the parables, we concentrate on the work of Richard Trench, who wrote Notes on the Parables in 1841. He merits attention because many pastors have been trained according to his approach.⁷ He distinguishes between the parable and an allegory, but in effect allegorizes many of the parables. Concerning the difference between parable and allegory, Trench writes:

It remains to consider wherein the parable differs from the allegory, which it does in form rather than

in essence: there being in the allegory, an interpenetration of the thing signifying and the thing signified, the qualities and properties of the first being attributed to the last, and the two thus blended together, instead of being kept quite distinct and placed side by side, as is the case in the parable.⁸

He holds that the proper interpretation of the parable lies completely outside the parable itself and yet corresponds completely with the details of the parable.

The fact that we sometimes fail to understand the details properly is due to our imperfection.⁹ Hunter points out that Trench, although in principle disavowing the necessity of interpreting the details of a parable, in practice tries to press most of the details. He cites an example:

Thus in his study of *The Seed Growing Spontaneously* he says that the main point is 'the secret invisible energy of the Divine Word' which unfolds itself irresistibly according to the laws of its being. But then he feels constrained to raise the question, who sowed the seed? It must be Christ, he guesses, only to encounter the phrase 'he knows not how'. Such ignorance cannot be predicted of Christ. Does then the man who sowed the seed signify Christ's ministers? Hardly, for they do not reap the harvest; Christ does. So, after all, the sower must be Christ, 'though not exclusively', since 'he knows not how' applies to Christ's ministers. In short, the good archbishop is hard put to it to catch a hare which he should never have started running!¹⁰

Trench finds in Jesus' interpretation of the parable of *The Tares and the Wheat* a key for the interpretation of all the parables. He suggests that since Christ gave a detailed

interpretation of this parable, our Lord certainly must have intended a detailed interpretation of all the parables.¹¹ As a final explication of the principles which Trench applies to the parables, we find this comment:

In treating the parables of Christ, the expositor must proceed on the presumption that there is import in every single point, and only desist from seeking it, when either it does not result without forcing, or when we can clearly show that this or that circumstance was merely added for the sake of giving intuitiveness to the narrative. We should not assume any thing to be non-essential, except when by holding it fast as essential the unity of the whole is marred and troubled.¹²

The Approach

When we study the principles of Trench, we find two underlying assumptions which characterize his approach. The first is a belief that the parables as we have them in the Gospel present the original teachings of Jesus. In other words he does not ask the same questions which the form critics ask regarding the variations in the Synoptic accounts and their relation to the original teachings of Jesus. We can deduce that Trench would uphold the unity of the text from the manner in which he attacks Strauss (Leben Jesu) for suggesting that Matthew inserted the maltreatment of servants in the

Marriage of the King's Son Parable or that the Wedding Garment is a separate parable.¹³

The second assumption of the traditional view is that there are two spheres, the natural and the supernatural or spiritual. As Trench puts it, "the earthly relation is indeed but a lower form of the heavenly, on which it rests, and of which it is the utterance."¹⁴ The two realms are in perfect harmony with each other even though man is often incapable of perceiving the correspondence. The same God who created the world is our spiritual Father. Because the natural and the spiritual realms are controlled by the same God, their correspondence is perfect in every detail. Consequently, whenever Christ proclaims a parable, making use of the details of nature, there is a perfect spiritual understanding of the parable which lies alongside the details from nature. Trench comments:

In like manner the parables were a calling of attention to the spiritual facts which underlie all processes of nature, all institutions of human society, and which, though unseen, are the true ground and support of these.¹⁵

In a sense the first assumption about the unity of Scripture is a product of the second assumption about a complete harmony between the natural and spiritual spheres. On the basis of this approach, every possible reference to God, Christ, the Church, or faith in the parables would normally

be given this spiritual meaning because of the unity of the natural and the spiritual. Is Christ the son in the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen? Trench never considers any other possibility. Assuming that Christ is the son, he goes on to refute those who blame an all-knowing Householder God for sending His Son on such a hopeless mission.¹⁶

An Evaluation

The traditional interpretation of parables as represented by Trench attempts to proclaim the Christian faith in Christocentric Law-Gospel terms. But the method which Trench employs is not sound exegesis. As Martin Scharlemann points out, "this principle is neo-Platonic in nature, not Scriptural."¹⁷ This traditional method of seeking harmony between the natural and spiritual spheres often imposes a unity on the parables which is not really present. The effort to find such unity sometimes blurs the rich variation in the Synoptic Gospels and makes it difficult to reckon with the many discontinuous items in the parables (e.g. the king in the Parable of the Wedding Feast burning the whole city before inviting others from the city to attend the feast).¹⁸

Form Critical Interpretation

Brief History

Our overview of form critical interpretation of the parables revolves around three important names: Adolf Jülicher, C.H. Dodd, and Joachim Jeremias. With his two volume work Die Gleichnisreden Jesu (Vol. I 1888, Vol. II 1899), Jülicher lashed out against the allegorical approach, which dominated the field of parabolic interpretation. Jülicher maintained that the parables of Jesus were similitudes, not allegories. In keeping with this, each parable has one tertium comparationis, not several. Jesus used these parables to make his message vivid and dramatic to the multitudes. When interpreting a parable one should look for a single general point and ignore the rest as dramatic machinery.¹⁹

Although Jülicher succeeded in undermining the allegorical method of interpretation, his own method suffered from his liberal presuppositions. Scharlemann comments: "This kind of interpretation reduces the parables to being illustrations of eminently sound moral and religious principles but not more."²⁰ Many of Jülicher's interpretations were so general as to be almost without meaning. For

example, he interprets the Rich Man and Poor Lazarus as instructing people to bring joy to such as live in pain and terror to those who live at ease.²¹ Jeremias, himself an exponent of Jülicher's exegetical approach to the parables, levels this well-aimed criticism at him:

We are told that the parables announce a genuine religious humanity; they are stripped of their eschatological import. Imperceptibly, Jesus is transformed into an 'apostle of progress.'²²

The second important name in form critical interpretation of parables is C.H. Dodd. In 1935 Dodd's book The Parables of the Kingdom introduced a key concept into the interpretation of parables. Dodd suggests that the all important question in parabolic interpretation is this: What was the original setting for the parables as Jesus told them? Dodd explains how this concept is put to work:

We must carefully scrutinize the parable itself and attempt to relate it to the original situation, so far as we can reconstruct it. From this will follow the conclusion regarding its original meaning and application, which may be guided by the following principles: 1. The clue must be found, not in ideas which developed only with the experience of the early Church, but in such ideas as may be supposed to have been in the minds of the hearers of Jesus during His ministry. Our best guide to such ideas will often be the Old Testament, with which they may have presumed to be familiar. 2. The meaning which we attribute to the parable must be congruous with the interpretation of his own ministry offered by Jesus in explicit sayings.²³

Dodd's work is generally accepted today as the best method of interpreting the parables. Those who quarrel with him oppose him mostly because of his view of realized eschatology, which also finds expression in his book on the parables.

The third important figure in modern parabolic interpretation is Joachim Jeremias. Following Dodd's interpretation very closely, Jeremias spells out in detail the manner in which the early Church shaped the original message of the parables, and then suggests the basic content of Jesus' original proclamation through the parables.

He explains the primary purpose of the parables of Jesus:

What we have to deal with is a conception which is essentially simple but involves far-reaching consequences. It is that the parables of Jesus are not-- at any rate primarily--literary productions, nor is it their object to lay down general maxims, but each of them was uttered in an actual situation of the life of Jesus, in a particular and often unforeseen crisis. Moreover, as we shall see, they were preponderantly concerned with a situation of conflict; they correct, reprove, attack: for the greater part, though not exclusively, the parables are weapons of warfare.

... . Jesus spoke to men of flesh and blood; he addressed himself to the situation of the moment. Each of his parables has a definite historical setting. Hence to recover this is the task before us. What did Jesus intend to say at this or that particular moment? What must have been the effect of his word upon his hearers? These are the questions we must ask in order, so far as may be possible, to recover the original meaning of the parables of Jesus, to hear again his authentic voice.²⁴

The Dodd-Jeremias return to the original setting of the parables of Jesus has served as an aid in returning to a more sober and adequate interpretation of them.

The Approach

A form critical approach to the interpretation of the parables involves looking at each parable in two ways: first, as the early Church told the parable and secondly, as Jesus might have told it originally. We will look first at the ways in which the early Church may have changed the original intention of the parables. Dodd suggests that the Church would naturally need to make two changes in the original meanings of the parables. Those parables which originally pointed to an immediate, crisis situation in the present were applied to an eschatological crisis arising in the future. Those which applied to a particular situation were generalized and given a permanent application. Dodd refers to these two motives of the Church as "eschatological" and "homiletic" or "paraenetic."²⁵

Jeremias sets forth seven principles of transformation which the early Church employed:

1. Embellishment: He uses as an example the Parable of

the Pounds (Luke 19:11-27) and the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30). Matthew exaggerates the sum of money while Luke exaggerates the number of servants.²⁶

2. The change of audience: Jeremias asserts that many of the parables which were originally addressed to Jesus' opponents, the Pharisees, are now addressed to the disciples so as to speak more directly to the early Church. He uses as an example the Parable of the Lost Sheep which in Luke is addressed to Jesus' opponents, but in Matthew is addressed to the disciples (Luke 15:3-7 and Matt. 18:12-14).²⁷

3. The Hortatory Use of the Parables by the Church: Jeremias feels that in some cases the Church changed a parable from its original eschatological context into one which was conducive for instruction and exhortation.²⁸

4. The Influence of the Church's Situation, especially the delay of the parousia: Jeremias uses the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins as an example (Matt. 25:1-13). He says that presenting Christ as the bridegroom is clearly an allegory of the Church. The "watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" he regards as secondary to the parable itself. The original parable confronted the audience of Jesus with an imminent eschatological crisis.²⁹

5. Allegorization: Jeremias maintains that originally the self-revelation of Christ was at best veiled and indirect. However, the Church inserted considerable christology: "the thief, the bridegroom, the master of the house, the merchant, the king, were interpreted of Christ."³⁰ In evaluating the degree of allegorizing in the three Synoptic Gospels, which is important for our consideration of the Wicked Husbandmen, Jeremias concludes that the material in Matthew and Luke, the Markan material, and the special Matthean material all contain considerable allegory whereas the special Lukan material is relatively free from allegory.³¹

6. The Collection and Conflation of Parables: Jeremias notes that some of the parables appear in doublets (e.g. The Tares among the Wheat and the Seine Net - Matt. 13), some in collections (e.g. seven parousia parables - Matt. 24:32-25:46), while a few parables may be the result of fusion (e.g. The Great Supper and the Wedding Garment - Matt. 22:1-14).³²

7. The Setting: Some parables are placed in a secondary context (e.g. The Parable of the Great Supper in Luke has been placed in the setting of table-sayings with a varied audience to help explain the parable.).³³ Some parables indicate an artificial situation created by the Redactor

(e.g. On a number of occasions Jesus speaks to the public and then turns to his disciples to reveal a deeper meaning.).³⁴

The introductory formulas used by different writers should be noted carefully in detecting a secondary setting. Matthew uses "the Kingdom is like" ten times, while Mark and Luke use it only twice each.³⁵ The conclusion of the parables also merits watching in the same connection. Note the Matthaean phrase "wailing and gnashing of teeth." Often the conclusion is generalized.³⁶

Dodd provides us with an example of the early Church at work, conjectural of course, but helpful in understanding the form critical approach. He uses the Parable of the Talents in Matthew (25:14-30) and Pounds in Luke (19:12-27) for illustration. First, he suggests that the original meaning of the parable was directed against a Jew who meticulously observed the Law in a legalistic sense. Next, the Church applies the parable homiletically with this maxim in mind: "To him that hath shall be given (Matt. 25:29)." It is in this form that Matthew and Luke receive the tradition. Matthew further develops the parable homiletically, grading the amounts of money received by the servants to illustrate varieties of human endowment. Now the parable enters an eschatological stage with an

emphasis on the second advent of Christ. Matthew depicts the unprofitable servant as being cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. This refers to the Last Judgment. Luke pictures Christ as a nobleman who journeys to a far country and returns as judge to slay the wicked.³⁷

Having looked at the transformation of many parables by the early Church, we now view how Jeremias and Dodd reconstruct certain parables in their original meaning. Jeremias operates on the assumption that Jesus for the most part made use of metaphors from the Old Testament:

Father, king, judge, are metaphors for God; for men in relation to him, children, servants, debtors; for God's people we have the vineyard, the fig-tree, the flock; the harvest is the end of the age; hell is fire and darkness; the marriage feast and the great supper represent salvation, and so on.³⁸

While recognizing that it is dangerous to make a sharp distinction between a parable and an allegory, Dodd believes that the parables of the Gospels are true to nature and life.

As a result of his study of the teachings of Jesus and his attempted reconstruction of the parables, Jeremias comes up with eight great themes of Jesus' proclamation:

1. The great assurance; 2. Now is the day of salvation;
3. God's mercy for sinners (addressed to opponents); 4. The

imminence of catastrophe; 5. The challenge of the crisis; 6. Realized discipleship; 7. The via dolorosa of the Son of Man; 8. The consummation.³⁹

Dodd's interpretation of the parable of the Tares among the Wheat will serve as an example of a parable in its original setting. Disregarding the explanation of the parable (Matt. 13:36-43), Dodd makes the following observations:

It is a realistic story of agricultural life, told vividly and naturally. Attention is fixed upon the moment at which the farmer becomes aware that there are weeds among his corn. The spiteful act of his enemy is a part of the dramatic machinery of the story and has no independent significance. He regrets the weeds, but is quite content to leave things as they are, knowing that the harvest will provide opportunity for separating wheat and weeds. . . . (point) As little as a farmer delays his reaping when harvest-time is come, because there are weeds among the crop, so little does the coming of the Kingdom of God delay because there are sinners in Israel.⁴⁰

An Evaluation

By seeking to determine the original setting of the parables, Dodd and Jeremias have helped to eliminate certain allegorical excesses of previous interpretations. It is easier to appreciate the Palestinian setting when certain elements present because of the early Church are sifted out.

However, it must be observed that the technique employed by Dodd and Jeremias may be quite arbitrary. In attempting to isolate the original setting of a parable, one needs to decide what Jesus could not or would not have said to a Palestinian audience. At the same time one must determine what the early Church would have been likely to insert. Since the text of the Synoptic Gospels and the history of the Church reconstructed from the rest of the New Testament are all we have to work with, it is often difficult to distinguish between what the early Church proclaimed and what Jesus may have taught. For these reasons, Scharlemann makes this comment:

One might observe at this point that no two form critics agree in their conclusions. Jeremias has applied this method about as consistently and thoroughly as one can imagine. His volume contains much that is constructive; and yet one must begin to wonder whether the original form of the parables can be fully determined at all.⁴¹

C.F.D. Moule after agreeing that the early Church did employ allegory to embellish the original parables in some cases adds a word of caution:

It remains true that if, warned by such evidence, we mechanically rule out all allegory as impossible in the original teachings of Jesus, or deny that he ever addressed parables of warning to his own disciples, we go beyond the evidence and perhaps defy commonsense.⁴²

In the second half of this paper, we will test the approach of Jeremias and Dodd by examining the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen. After studying the material in the Synoptic Gospels, we will evaluate whether it is possible to reconstruct the original parable of Jesus.

CHAPTER III

THE PARABLE OF THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN

The Proclamation of the Early Church

Mark 12: 1-12

A first factor in deciding whether Christ is the son in St. Mark's account of the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen involves the preceding context. This parable definitely lies in the setting of Jesus' passion. Following the famous passion predictions of 8:31, 9:31, and 10:33, Jesus triumphantly enters into Jerusalem with his disciples. On the following day, Jesus chases the money-changers out of the temple. We are told that "the chief priests and the scribes heard it and sought a way to destroy him; for they feared him, because all the multitude was astonished at his teaching."¹ As our Lord walks from Bethany toward the temple another day, the chief priests and the scribes and elders come to him with a question regarding the source of his authority. He counters by asking whether John the Baptizer received the power to baptize from heaven or from men. At this point, Christ begins to speak $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\iota\varsigma \ \epsilon\upsilon\ \pi\alpha\rho\alpha\beta\omicron\lambda\alpha\iota\varsigma$ (12:1).

As He tells the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, his audience is clearly these same chief priests, scribes, and elders. From His recent conflicts with this group, we can understand a bitter hostility toward Jesus on their part.

The second major factor is the Song of the Vineyard (Isaiah 5:1ff.) which Jesus quotes in the opening verses of the parable (12:1-2). The fact that Jesus is alluding to this parable in Isaiah can be demonstrated by the presence in the Markan text of the following words from the LXX text: ἀμπέλων, φυτέω, περιτίθημι, φραχμός, ὀρύσσω, ὑπολήνιον (Is. προλήνιον), οἰκοδομέω, + πύργος (Isaiah 5:1ff.). In the Song of the Vineyard, Israel is pictured as the Lord's vineyard, which is tenderly cared for. Yet despite the Lord's care, Israel yielded wild grapes in a very disappointing fashion. The Lord declares his judgment upon Israel in these words:

And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard.
I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured;
I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled
down. I will make it a waste; it shall not be
pruned or hoed, and briars and thorns shall grow up;
I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain
upon it.²

Jesus in Mark's account does not carry the Isaiah allusion to Israel as the vineyard through His parable. Yet the note of judgment sounded to Israel in the Isaiah parable is

important to the theme of the Wicked Husbandmen. As Vincent Taylor points out, the various details regarding the vineyard (hedge, pit, tower, wine press) have no allegorical significance but rather set the stage for the parable.³ After describing the vineyard, Mark departs from the Song of the Vineyard in Isaiah as he focuses on the γεωργοί. These husbandmen occupy the central position in the parable. The man, having leased out his vineyard to these husbandmen, goes away into another country.

As a third factor of the parable in Mark, we look at the sending of the δούλοι (12:2-5). There is a variation as to the number of servants between Mark, Matthew, and Luke which merits our consideration. As Mark records the parable, three individual servants are sent. The first receives a beating at the hands of the husbandmen. Mark uses this phraseology: καὶ λαβόντες αὐτὸν ἔδειραν καὶ ἀπέστειλαν κενόν (12:3). The second servant was also mistreated and sent away empty. There is considerable debate as to his specific injuries because of an uncertain word (ἐκεφαλίσωσαν). Some manuscripts read ἐκεφαλίσωσαν instead. Both Taylor⁴ and Cranfield⁵ discuss this problem at some length in their commentaries on Mark. For our purposes, it is sufficient to note that the word refers to some sort of injury to the head,

and coupled with the verb $\eta\tau\acute{\iota}\mu\alpha\sigma\alpha\nu$ it seems to indicate a more severe punishment than was inflicted upon the first servant. When the third servant comes to collect the master's share of the produce, the husbandmen kill him ($\alpha\pi\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\tau\epsilon\iota\nu\alpha\nu$). Mark then mentions that many others are sent; some are beaten and some killed. In trying to interpret the parable from Mark's point of view, we could regard these servants as merely part of the machinery of the story or as representing historical figures from the Old Testament, perhaps the prophets. At this point, it is difficult to make a decision. However, the fact that three servants are sent, followed by others, might well point to allegorization since it is unlikely that the natural story would include this many attempts to collect the dues. Dodd discusses this particular point and arrives at the conclusion that this feature is clearly embellishment on the part of the early Church.⁶ Furthermore, the fact that Mark pictures the wickedness of the husbandmen as becoming progressively greater certainly prepares the stage for the sending of the son which we will discuss next.

A fourth factor is connected with the manner in which Mark treats the sending of the son by the master (12:6-8). The son is described by the word $\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\eta\tau\acute{o}\nu$, which literally

means beloved. Taylor asserts that it means *μονογενής*, as it does in Mark 1:11 where a voice from heaven labels Jesus as *ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός*. Taylor questions whether the use of *ἀγαπητός* here warrants a Messianic designation, probably because *μονογενής* has non-Messianic usage in the Old Testament (Gen. 22:2).⁷ To Mark's readers the word *ἀγαπητός* in connection with *υἱόν* might very well suggest Christ, the beloved Son of the Father. Mark also uses the word *ἐσχάτος* which could easily be interpreted as support for the view that after a long line of prophets had been persecuted, Christ came to suffer and die. Neither Matthew nor Luke use the word in their parallel accounts. However, it should be noted that Mark no where else in his Gospel uses the word *ἐσχάτος* with this type of emphasis. When the son comes to collect, the husbandmen decide among themselves to kill him with the hope that they might obtain his inheritance. Mark records these words: *καὶ λαβόντες ἀπέκτειναν αὐτόν, καὶ ἐξέβαλον αὐτόν ἔξω τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος* (v.8). Matthew and Luke record that the son was taken outside the vineyard and then killed, while Mark indicates that after killing the son, they threw his body outside the vineyard unburied. If Mark were attempting a complete allegory, he could have brought the events of the son's death into closer connection

with the death of Christ.

A final factor in interpreting Mark's account of the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen centers on the application of the parable and its effect upon the chief priests and scribes (12:9-12). As Jesus finishes the parable, he asks his audience what the owner of the vineyard will do. Then, he at once answers his own question: ²ΕΛΕΥΣΕΤΑΙ ΚΑΙ ²ΑΠΟΛΕΪΣΕΙ ΤΟΥΣ ΓΕΩΡΓΟΥΣ, ΚΑΙ ΔΩΣΕΙ Τὸν ἀμπελῶνα ἄλλοις (v.9b). In Matthew Jesus' audience answers the questions, which, according to Dodd,⁸ is more in keeping with the parables of Jesus. He notes also that the evangelists are prone to give a moral to the parables at the end. This might mean that Mark means to apply the parable with Christ as the son and the scribes as the husbandmen. However, the ideas which the answer expresses are not foreign to the teaching of Jesus, as Taylor points out.⁹ Mark speaks of the vineyard being given to others. There is no good reason for defining the ἄλλοις as the Gentiles or the Christian Church, at least in any precise manner. All three evangelists quote from Psalm 117 (118): 22f. The question is whether this quotation was originally part of the parable or whether it was added by Mark and the early Church as a confession of their faith in the Risen Christ. Taylor suggests that this quotation was part of the

original parable. He points out that the quotation is not introduced with a typical Markan introduction (). He further notes that Rabbinic parables often closed with quotations from the Scriptures. Taylor believes it probable that the early Christian community used the quotation from Psalm 117 (118) so frequently (cf. Acts 2:33; 1 Pet. 2:7; Acts 4:11)¹⁰ because they remembered that Jesus Himself used the passage as a devastating attack upon the scribes and elders of the Jews.¹¹ To these arguments of Taylor, Cranfield adds the point that this psalm was one of the Hallel psalms which Jesus used.¹² I am inclined to agree with Taylor and Cranfield that this question could be attributed to Jesus. There is no textual reason for interpreting this quotation as referring to the resurrection of Christ here.

Mark's description of the Pharisees' reaction to the parable has considerable bearing upon the parable in his Gospel. He mentions that they perceived the parable which was told against them. As he describes how they sought to arrest him, Mark uses characteristic words -- *ἰητεύω*, *κρατῆσαι*, *φοβέομαι*, *ὄχλος*, etc. He alone of the three Synoptics mentions that the scribes and elders went away (*καὶ ἀφέντες αὐτὸν ἀπήλθον*), indicating how completely they identified with the husbandmen. The effect of the

parable on the leaders of the Jews in Mark would seem to favor interpreting also Christ as the son.

Summarizing our findings, the parable as recorded in Mark does seem to identify Christ with the only son for these reasons: 1. The parable is set in a judgment context with the bitter conflict between Christ and the Jewish leaders at hand. The Isaiah 5 allusion adds to this judgment context. 2. There seems to be a progression of wickedness moving from the mistreatment and killing of the servants to the final sending of the only son who is killed. Whether or not the servants are identified with the prophets, the killing of the son is at the center of the parable. 3. By the Psalm 117 (118) quotation, the Jewish leaders are plainly identified with the husbandmen. Their own reaction indicated that they so identified themselves. Identifying Christ, their bitter opponent, the stone of stumbling, with the son in the parable would seem to be a natural step for the Jewish leaders, associating themselves with the husbandmen. This is the impression which Mark's Gospel gives.

Matthew 21: 33-46

Matthew also places this parable in the passion context.

After parrying the question of the chief priests regarding His authority, Jesus tells three parables of which the Wicked Husbandmen is the second. The first parable is The Two Sons (21:28-32). At the end of the parable Jesus lashes out against the leaders of the Jews with this statement: "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." (21:31, cf. v. 32 ad finem) The third parable is the Wedding Feast of the King's Son (22:1-14). In this parable Jesus describes the murder of the king's servants and his sending of troops to destroy the murderers and burn their city. Obviously in Matthew's account the conflict between the Jewish leaders and Christ is intensified.

As we examine verse 33 we notice that Matthew also makes reference to Isaiah 5:1f., following Mark. He uses approximately the same LXX words as Mark. Trilling suggests that Matthew follows the Song of the Vineyard throughout this parable with judgment on Israel, the vineyard, as the underlying theme.¹³ We must look at the rest of the parable before evaluating Trilling's thesis. Nothing in verse 33 indicates this difference. In this verse Matthew uses the word *οικοδεσποτης* to describe the owner of the vineyard. Neither Mark nor Luke use this term. The same word is

used elsewhere in Matthew in connection with parables (Matt. 24:43; 13:27; 20:1) and is linked with δούλοι . No particular importance can be attached to the word as far as allegory is concerned, because Matthew uses it also of the man who waits for the final judgment (24:43). Matthew like Mark reports that the owner of the vineyard leased out the vineyard and went into another country. M'Neile, interpreting the parable as an allegory in some respects, believes that ἀπεδήμησεν refers to the transcendence of God the Father, rather than His departure from His people.¹⁴ Again, we can not pass judgment on this assertion until we examine more of Matthew's style.

The sending of the servants in Matthew 21: 34-36 differs in detail from the sending of servants in Mark. Matthew reports that the servants were sent in two waves. The first group was received hostilely ὃν μὲν εἰδὲσαν, ὃν δὲ ἀπέκτειναν, ὃν δὲ ἐλιθοβόλησαν (v. 35). We notice that instead of a single servant, δούλοι are sent. Their fate combines the punishments of the three servants in Mark, beating, killing, and stoning. Whereas the order of mistreatment was significant in Mark with the most serious crime left until last, here the order in this respect is not important because ἀπέκτειναν precedes ἐλιθοβόλησαν. However,

Trilling regards the stoning as a clear reference to the prophets (cf. 23:37).¹⁵ Matthew then mentions the sending of a second group of δούλοι, larger than the first, with the same crimes resulting. Jeremias sees in these two waves of servants a clear reference to the missions of the earlier and later prophets with the mention of stoning definitely pointing to the fate of the prophets (II Chr. 24:21; Heb. 11:37; Mt. 23:37; Lk. 13:34).¹⁶ McNeile comments: "The audience could not fail to see the allusion to the treatment of prophets in the past (cf. 5:12; 23:31, 37)."¹⁷ Because the text presents no differing punishments between the first group and the second group, Trilling is wary of pressing the details so closely:

So muss wenigstens gesagt werden, dass die Unterscheidung zweier bestimmter Gruppen, besonders der vorderen und hinteren Propheten, aus dem Text nicht genügend zu begründen ist.¹⁸

Since Matthew changes the Markan pattern so extensively and since it would be difficult to imagine a real life situation where two large waves of servants would be sent to collect dues, I would conclude that the δούλοι here should be interpreted as the prophets. But I would, with Trilling, avoid being more specific in designating which prophets are intended here.

The interpretation of the sending of the son (21:37-39)

is molded by our designation of the δούλοι as prophets.

It should be noted that Matthew does not use the adjective

ἀγαπητόν which both Mark and Luke employ, but rather uses

the pronoun αὐτοῦ . Trilling, who believes that Matthew

is interested in presenting the whole story, nevertheless

feels that the designation αὐτοῦ has the same significance

as ἀγαπητόν . "Durch das Pronomen αὐτοῦ ist die Bedeutung

'einzig' auch bei Mt. genügend klar."¹⁹ Matthew along

with Luke describes the death of the son as taking place

outside of the vineyard, while Mark reports the slaying

inside the vineyard with the body thrown outside, unburied.

Most commentators notice Matthew's attempt to bring the

slaying of the son in line with Christ's crucifixion out=

side the walls of Jerusalem.²⁰ Taylor, however, citing

the evidence of D (ϛ) it Ir Lcf, suggests that Matthew

did not really make this shift although Luke did.²¹

The weight of evidence seems to lie with the suggestion

that Matthew did picture the slain outside the vineyard

to correspond with the passion sequence.

We must spend considerable time on the application

of the parable in Matthew, because it bears on the inter=

pretation of the entire parable. First, in Matthew the

audience answers the question which Jesus directs to them

and thereby pronounces condemnation on themselves. This seems strange if we are to interpret the parable allegorically in Matthew. If the chief priests understood that they were being challenged and judged, would they have pronounced condemnation on themselves? Dodd points out that having the audience answer the question is the normal form associated with parables.²² If Matthew is a secondary account, why would his report contain this primary element even though his parable is more allegorical than Mark's? The question cannot easily be answered. It could be argued that Matthew was more concerned with his audience, the Christian community, than with recording the parable accurately. This might explain the inconsistency of having the chief priests fail to understand an obvious allegory. It would not explain why Matthew used a more correct parabolic ending than his Markan source. Luke follows Mark on this point. The answer of the Jewish leaders in Matthew will serve as a caution against an approach which considers the parable complete allegory on the part of the Christian community.

Secondly, we must take up the word καρπός as it is used in this section. In the answer of the Jewish leaders (v.41) Matthew writes καὶ τὸν ἀμπελῶνα ἐκδώσεται ἄλλοις γεωργοῖς, οἵτινες ἀποδώσουσιν αὐτῷ τοὺς καρποὺς ἐν τοῖς καρποῖς αὐτῶν.

This ties in with the reference in v. 34 to the owner sending his servants at the time τῶν καρπῶν to receive from the τοὺς γεωργοὺς τοὺς καρποὺς αὐτοῦ. It can be understood in a natural fashion, namely that now the owner will lease the vineyard to husbandmen who will return to him the part which is rightfully his. But v. 43 tends to give an interpretation to these first two καρπός references: "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given εἰς τοὺς ποιούντι τοὺς καρποὺς αὐτῆς ." Here καρπός clearly has a spiritual meaning, in terms of the Christian life. Bornkamm finds here an evidence of the manner in which Matthew makes the parable meaningful for the early Church. Also the Church which has now replaced wicked Israel must at the last day be judged by her fruits.²³

He further comments:

This is expressed, as we have already pointed out, with all the clarity that could be desired in the Matthaean conclusion of the parable of the wicked husbandmen. This parable in Mark 12:1ff. obviously refers to the rejection of Israel which has already taken place and to the subsequent handing over of the vineyard to others; in Matthew, on the other hand, it is translated into the future so that the disciples themselves are now drawn into the judgment and the question is thus put before them whether they are the nation bringing forth the fruits of the Kingdom.²⁴

Bornkamm attaches an ethical interpretation to the word καρπός. This is questionable because verse 43 which

mentions the bringing forth of καρπός begins with διὰ τούτου . This important phrase refers back to verse 42 where the stone is mentioned which is the "Lord's doing, marvelous in our eyes." Verse 42 centers on God's act of grace. In this context it appears that the word καρπός refers to confessing God's bestowal of grace based on Christ, the cornerstone of the Church. Even if καρπός does not refer to the ethical life of the Christian Church, it is still very important to the parable, as Bornkamm suggests. Only Matthew uses the word καρπός in this parable. He is also the only one to apply the Kingdom of God to the process of handing over the vineyard to a nation which produces fruit. If we view καρπός as a key word in the parable, our thoughts turn to the transfer of the Kingdom from the Jewish audience to the Christian Church.

The third investigation arises from our examination of καρπός in this parable. What is meant by ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ in verse 43 and how does it relate to ἔδνει? The meaning of βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ is questioned in verse 43 because Matthew normally uses the phrase βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν . Most commentators today seem to feel that Matthew is using βασιλεία in a different sense from what he means when he uses βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν . They do not question the

Matthaeian authorship of this section. For example, Allen comments that when Matthew uses βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν he refers to the eschatological kingdom which Christ announces. Matthew realizes that this designation would be unsuitable here, because the Kingdom in this sense could not be transferred from Jewish leaders to the Christian Church.²⁵ Bornkamm maintains that in his Gospel Matthew uses βασιλεία also to refer to a kingdom on earth.²⁶ Trilling feels that v. 43 is definitely Matthaeian:

Die Verwendung von βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ in v43 hat somit nach dem mt Sprachgebrauch nichts Auffälliges und bildet kein schwerwiegendes Argument gegen seine Autorschaft. Vielmehr ist abschliessend zu sagen, dass der ganz v43 aus kompositionellen, stilistischen und sachlichen Gründen mit hoher Wahrscheinlichkeit bis Sicherheit von Mt selbst verfasst ist.²⁷

The βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ refers to a present reality which will be transferred from Jesus' opponents to an ἔθνος producing the fruits of it. This is the only place in Matthew's Gospel where ἔθνος appears in the singular. If it were in the plural, the heathen might be understood. A specific nation could theoretically be intended here, but what nation would be adequate to the picture? We must conclude that ἔθνος refers here to the new Israel, the Church. This is Trilling's conclusion "dass nur die Kirche gemeint sein kann."²⁸ We see then that βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ

in verse 43 is something which the Church can receive.

There is now, fourthly, a question as to the identity of the group from which the Kingdom is being taken away. From our textual study it would appear that the Jewish leaders, the γεωργοί in the parable are the ones who lose the Kingdom. Yet the exact opposite of the ἔθνος, the Church, is not the Jewish leaders but Israel herself. In order to resolve this conflict, Trilling suggests that Matthew uses the Song of the Vineyard in Isaiah throughout the parable, so that the husbandmen, the Jewish leaders, in a sense represent all of the old Israel. He points out that severe judgment is spoken against Israel in the Isaiah Song and that this judgment would certainly lodge in the minds of Jesus' audience.²⁹ Some truth can be found in Trilling's suggestion when we notice that in verse 41 the Jewish leaders reply that the vineyard will be taken from the γεωργοί and given to other γεωργοί who will give him fruits. The γεωργοί who give fruits are in verse 43 associated with the ἔθνος who will produce fruits, namely the Church. It is not impossible, then, to associate the Jewish leaders, the γεωργοί in the parable, with the Israel who is condemned by the Song of the Vineyard in Isaiah.

With an understanding of the contrast between the old Israel and the new Israel, we approach the reference

in verse 42 to Psalm 117(118). Who is the stone which the builders reject? In the psalm the stone is Zion, that is Israel, who was almost destroyed by the world powers of Assyria and Babylonia but whose glories were somewhat restored by the Maccabean victories.³⁰ Israel cannot be the stone in the Matthaean setting, because the stone is rejected by the old Israel and becomes the cornerstone of the new Israel. The stone must be Christ in this context:

1. We observed that Matthew interprets the two waves of servants in the parable as the prophets.
2. We further suggested that the son, who was cast outside the city to be killed, clearly refers to Christ.
3. The use of the word *κρηττός* indicates that Matthew is addressing himself to the early Christian community as the new Israel.
4. This psalm text, according to Dodd,³¹ was apparently used in the Christian community at an early date in reference to the death and resurrection of Christ. Therefore, there seems to be no reason for doubting that Christ is the stone in Matthew's use of the psalm quotation. The textual evidence for verse 44 does not permit a decision as to whether it should be included in the Matthaean text. This verse is not necessary to prove that Christ is the stone, but if it belongs in the Matthaean text, we have additional

reason to maintain a reference to Christ in the Psalm 117 (118) quotation.

Is Christ the son in Matthew's account of the Wicked Husbandmen? In order to assess the place of this question in Matthew's account, we must have a general understanding of the relation between Christ and the Church in Matthew. Trilling makes a helpful distinction between a heilsgeschichtlich and a christological interpretation of this parable. The heilsgeschichtlich interpretation concentrates on the rejection of the Jews and the bestowal of the Kingdom on the new Israel. The christological interpretation concentrates on the importance of Christ in the parable.³² Our study of καρπός, βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ, and ἔθνος has led us to recognize Matthew's emphasis on the continuity between the old and the new Israel. This would be called an heilsgeschichtlich emphasis. Trilling seems to indicate that this emphasis dominates in the Matthaean account.³³ Against Trilling's view, we place the comment of Bornkamm regarding the paucity of ecclesiological references in Matthew's Gospel, certainly an important part of a heils-
geschichtlich approach:

And yet it must be agreed from the beginning that in spite of all these passages only the most meager beginnings of a real ecclesiology, centered in the Church as an independent, empirically circumscribed

entity, are to be found in Matthew's Gospel. There is no similar number of ecclesiological concepts and words corresponding to the wealth of Christological titles and statements.³⁴

Strecker, who admits a strong historical tendency on the part of Matthew, nevertheless maintains that this heilsgeschichtlich tendency cannot be viewed apart from christology:

Wenn es richtig ist, dass matthäische Denken durch eine historische Tendenz bestimmt ist, dann ist zu vermuten, dass auch die Christologie historisch gedeutet ist.³⁵

In discussing Matthew's Genealogy (chapter one), Strecker points out the necessity of maintaining both Heilsgeschichte and christology in Matthew:

Wesentlich ist nicht die Reflexion über die Vergangenheit an sich, sondern über die Beziehung zum Leben Jesu. Deutlich aber ist, dass die Zeit Jesu nicht ohne ihre Vergangenheit gesehen wird.³⁶

In Matthew, then, the heilsgeschichtlich and the christological approaches come together. If we consider the *καρπός* as referring to a confession of the Messiah, Christ becomes the center of the history of Israel, the old Israel and the new Israel. Viewing Christ, the stone, as the center of Matthaean Heilsgeschichte, we can indeed affirm that he is the son in the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen.

Luke 20: 9-19

Luke, throughout this section of his Gospel, follows the Markan source rather closely. Consequently, the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen is also placed by Luke in a passion context. Creed in his commentary notes the following differences from Mark in the Lukan context:

1. In the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem Luke records the complaint of the Pharisees against Jesus' enthusiastic reception.
2. Luke joins together the two visits of Jesus to the temple mentioned in Mark. He minimizes the cleansing of the Temple scene and appends to it immediately the question of Jesus' authority.
3. Luke omits the cursing of the fig tree and the question of the scribe about the chief commandment. Otherwise Luke follows Mark's order rather closely.³⁷ It should be noted that in Luke's version of the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, his immediate audience is τὸν λαόν , although the rulers of the people are certainly present in the background. The fact that he does not address the rulers directly might indicate that Luke is not as greatly concerned with the immediate conflict setting of the parable.

Luke does refer to the planting of a vineyard (20:9)

along with Mark and Matthew. He thus makes an allusion to Isaiah 5:1f. However, Luke omits a number of the details of the vineyard which Mark includes. This would seem to indicate that he was not as concerned with the Old Testament background as Mark. It would certainly tend to suggest that he lacks the strong emphasis on Israel which Matthew indicates. As far as the owner leasing out the vineyard and departing into another country, Luke follows Mark quite closely, except that he adds the words *χρόνους ἰκανούς*. As Creed points out, this expression is typical of Luke's style.³⁸

The sending of the *δούλοι* in Luke (20: 10-12) follows a slightly different pattern from the other two Gospels. Like Mark, Luke describes three individual servants sent at different times. He omits Mark's reference to sending many others after the three. In introducing the sending of each of the three servants Luke employs a Hebraism -- *προσέθετο πέμψαι*, which can best be explained as an attempt to use a more Scriptural expression.³⁹ The most significant difference in this section between Luke and Mark is that Luke records that the third servant was merely wounded (*τραυματίσαντες*), not killed as in Mark (*ἀπέκτειναν*). This change seems to indicate that Luke is reserving the

crime of murder by the husbandmen for the son. Lampe⁴⁰ supports this interpretation, along with Creed.⁴¹ Because Luke reserves killing for the son, he may well be pointing to Christ as the Son who was slain. An examination of verse 15 will bear this out.

Luke records the details of the sending of the son in verses 13-15. Instead of directly mentioning the sending of the son, he presents his sending as a reflection on the part of the owner of the vineyard, prefaced by the words *τί ποιήσω;* (20:13). Again, this expression is typical of Luke's style. Creed refers us to Luke 12:17, 18 and 16:3.⁴² Along with Mark, Luke uses the word *ἀγαπητόν* to describe the son. With Matthew, he records that the son was cast out of the vineyard to be killed: *καὶ ἐκβαλόντες αὐτὸν ἔβω του ἄμπελωνος ἀπέκτειναν* (20:15). There is good reason to believe that Luke intends to bring the events of the parable in line with the facts of Christ's crucifixion outside of the city of Jerusalem.⁴³ When coupled with Luke's reservation of death for the son, this shift of the scene for the murder certainly seems to point to Christ.

The application of the parable in Luke (20:16-19) contains a few changes from Mark which should be noted. With Mark, he merely says that the vineyard will be given

ἄλλοις . He does not include the Matthaean details about bringing forth fruit. Jesus answers his own question as in Mark. In verse 16b, Luke adds a sentence not contained in either Matthew or Mark: ἀκούσαντες δὲ εἶπαν· μὴ γένοιτο. According to the context, we would have to assume that ἀκούσαντες refers to τὸν λαόν . From the nature of the reply we are inclined to think that the Jewish leaders are also intended in the ἀκούσαντες. What does the reply mean? It could mean that the people identified themselves with the husbandmen in the parable and thus dreaded God's judgment upon themselves. It could also mean that, recognizing the severity of the punishment upon the husbandmen, they prayed such a thing would never happen to them. In either case, their reaction to the fate of the husbandmen seems to be just the opposite of the Jewish leaders in Matthew who pronounce judgment on the husbandmen with apparent abandon. Certainly this sentence of Luke's points to a spiritual interpretation of the parable.

In his application of the parable, Luke not only quotes Psalm 117 (118):22 along with Mark and Matthew, but also adds another quotation in verse 18 which seems to be a mixture of Old Testament references. Lampe points to Isaiah 8:14 and Daniel 2:44 as possible sources for

this quotation.⁴⁴ The picture of this added verse is one of the stone as an instrument of destruction crushing those who fall against it and upon whom it falls. Creed maintains that this passage is peculiar to Luke, since the reference to it in Matthew is textually uncertain.⁴⁵ The addition of verse 18 in Luke would seem to point to a more developed reference to Christ as the stone, because it adds to the exaltation and power of the stone. Certainly, Luke's twofold reference to the stone here, besides underscoring the necessity of confessing him and not rejecting him, comes closer to describing the resurrection of Christ than the stone reference in Mark or Matthew.

Summarizing Luke's account of the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, we notice that for the most part Luke follows Mark's account of the parable. His own style is however present in the parable, as is indicated by phraseology common to him (*χρόνους ἱκανούς* and *τί ποιήσει*). Four changes seem to point to Christ as the son in the parable: 1. He reserves killing for the son. 2. He has the son cast outside the vineyard and then killed. 3. The answer of the people--*μη γένοιτο*--indicates that they applied the parable to themselves. 4. His addition of a stone reference from various Old Testament passages points

to an interpretation of Christ as the stone.

Is Christ the son in the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen as proclaimed by the early Church? All three Synoptic accounts seem to refer to Christ as the son although in different degrees. Mark points to Christ by his presentation of the intense conflict between Christ, the stone, and the Jewish leaders, the husbandmen. Matthew points to Christ as the center of his Heilsgeschichte of Israel. Luke comes closest to presenting Christ as the risen Son of God proclaimed by the early Church.

The Proclamation of Jesus

The Original Parable according to Dodd and Jeremias

Is Christ the son in the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen as Jesus originally told it? This question must be raised in the light of recent scholarship on the parables. The major quest of Dodd and Jeremias is to isolate the original parable from its accretions. We will first let Dodd reconstruct the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen and then see whether he would attempt to answer the question which this paper raises.

Although many Biblical scholars feel that it is

difficult to explain this parable in a natural sense because of its allegorical elements, Dodd maintains that the parable can be viewed as a natural story, reflecting the conditions in Palestine during the first century A.D. The details which have most often been questioned are the number of servants sent, the violence of the husbandmen in defiance of the vineyard owner, and the assigning to Jesus of a self-understanding which He could not have had. In reconstructing the parable, Dodd first points to the unsettled conditions in Palestine during the first century A.D. He states that the revolt of Judas the Gaulonite in A.D. 6 put the country in a state of unrest from which it never fully recovered. He further asserts that large estates were held by foreigners at that time. This would connect agrarian discontent with nationalist zeal. Under these conditions, Dodd believes that the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen could indeed have been told by Jesus.⁴⁶

Accordingly, he constructs the parable in this fashion:

An absentee landlord let off a vineyard to tenant cultivators. He made with them a contract stipulating produce. After vintage he sent his agents to demand his rent. But an absentee landlord is fair game if the tenants see their chance. They paid their rent in blows. The landlord, realizing that the situation was serious, sent his son to deal with it. The son of the proprietor would

surely command a respect which was denied to the slaves who had represented him in the first instance. But the tenantry already had the bit between their teeth. They murdered the landlord's son, cast his body unburied outside the vineyard, and seized the property.⁴⁷

Dodd has thus answered the first objection to the natural setting of the parable, namely that it is too violent to be realistic.

Secondly, he tackles the objection about the long series of servants who were sent. Removing the allegorical interpretations of the early Church, particularly the two waves of servants in Matthew and the reference to other servants in Mark 12:4, he finds remaining three servants which fits the pattern of this form of story (foldtales).⁴⁸

It is interesting to note that Jeremias, who generally follows Dodd's explanation of the parable, feels that in the original parable there was only one servant who was rejected on several occasions, basing it on the Lukan form.⁴⁹

Dodd also proposes an answer to the third objection which maintains that the murder of the son is too obvious a reflection of the theology of the early Church to be part of a parable of Jesus Himself. He maintains that the plot of the story with its climactic series of three servants demands a climax of iniquity which can best be reached by

the murder of a beloved son. He argues in this way:

The outrageous contumacy of the tenants must be exhibited in the most emphatic way. How could it better be emphasized than by bringing on the scene the landlord's only, or favorite, son? It is the logic of the story, and not any theological motive, that has introduced the figure.⁵⁰

Does Dodd say that Christ is the son in the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen? A complete answer to this question in connection with an original parable of Jesus would involve the whole question of Jesus' Messianic self-understanding which cannot be covered in this paper. No doubt Dodd's answer is influenced by his understanding of Jesus. He answers that in an indirect manner Jesus refers to Himself in this parable. Dodd points to the conflict context of the parable. He believes that Mark's setting is correct. Therefore he associates this parable with some of Jesus' passion predictions and his comments about the guilt of this generation. He feels that the primary point of the parable is judgment against the Jewish leaders. Let Dodd speak in his own words:

The parable therefore stands on its own feet as a dramatic story, inviting a judgment from the hearers, and the application of the judgment is clear enough without any allegorizing of the details. Nevertheless, the climax of iniquity in the story suggests a similar climax in the situation to which it is to be applied.

.....

The parable in itself gives expression to a moral judgment upon the situation; but by implication it may be said to 'predict' the death of Jesus, and the judgment to fall upon His slayers.⁵¹

An Evaluation

Before evaluating Dodd's view of the son in this parable, it is necessary to ask a more basic question: Has he succeeded in isolating the original parable as Jesus proclaimed it? I must admit that his insight into the troubled social and political conditions in Palestine during the first century A.D. is quite helpful in understanding the parable. Understanding these conditions, the fact that Matthew has the Jewish leaders answer the question as to the fate of the husbandmen makes more sense. An objective evaluation of the parabolic story would yield this type of condemning answer. Furthermore, Dodd's analysis of certain allegorical elements in the accounts of Mark, Matthew, and Luke seems to correspond with our examination of their separate approaches to the parable. But the question still remains whether Dodd has succeeded in isolating the original parable of Jesus. To what extent might Jesus Himself have employed a certain amount of allegory in the parable? If all three Synoptic Gospels contain

allegory of the early Church, how can this allegory be separated from the intention of Jesus? Why does the correct answer form of the parable appear in Matthew which seems to be farthest from the original meaning of Jesus according to Dodd's reconstruction? Since all three Gospels, according to their separate approaches, clearly identify Christ as the son in the parable, on what basis could any other answer to the research question be formulated? These questions indicate the interpretation problem to which Dodd and Jeremias address themselves. I contend that they have not succeeded in reconstructing an original parable which can be evaluated apart from the Synoptic sources.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

Methodology

1. The traditional approach of parabolic interpretation, represented by Archbishop Trench, is not valid because it imposes a harmony of the natural and spiritual spheres upon the Synoptic sources which tends to blur the unique message of each evangelist. Therefore, this approach has not been used in this paper.

2. The form critical approach of parabolic interpretation, represented by C.H. Dodd and Joachim Jeremias, helps to clarify the natural meaning of the parables, but is somewhat arbitrary in determining the original construction of a given parable. Their approach has been used in this paper to clarify the presentations of the individual Synoptic Gospels, but not to answer the research question.

3. In this paper I have investigated my research question by looking at the record of the parable in the three Synoptic Gospels. I find that my question can only be answered on the basis of these accounts.

An Answer

Is Christ the son in the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen? On the basis of my study in the Synoptic accounts, I conclude that the early Church, as represented by the proclamation of Mark, Matthew, and Luke, identified Christ with the son in this parable.

1. Mark, emphasizing very strongly the conflict between Christ and the Jewish leaders as our Lord approached the cross, identifies the son in the parable with Christ.

2. Matthew, who presents the Church as the new Israel of God replacing the old Israel which has rejected Him views Christ as the son and the center of Israel's Heilsgeschichte.

3. Luke, writing especially for the early Christian community with a sense of history in mind, makes Christ, the son in the parable, the cornerstone of the Church and an instrument of destruction upon all those who reject Him.

Remaining Questions

1. Was the Psalm 117 (118) quotation originally attached to Mark's source or was it added by the early

Church? A careful comparison between Matthew's use of the reference in connection with Israel and Luke's use might help to clarify its origin in Mark.

2. Will the current studies on Christ's self-understanding contribute to the search for the original meaning of the parables?

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER II

¹Archibald Hunter, Interpreting the Parables (London: SCM Press, c. 1960), pp. 21-41.

²Ibid., p. 21.

³Ibid., pp. 23-25.

⁴Ibid., p. 23.

⁵Ibid., p. 25.

⁶Ibid., pp. 31-35.

⁷Ibid., p. 36.

⁸Richard C. Trench, Notes on the Parables of Our Lord (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1855), p. 14.

⁹Ibid., pp. 21-24.

¹⁰Hunter, pp. 36-37.

¹¹Trench, p. 36.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., pp. 178-179.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 170.

¹⁷Martin H. Scharlemann, Proclaiming the Parables (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), p. 22.

¹⁸Matt. 22:7.

¹⁹Hunter, pp. 37-39.

²⁰Scharlemann, p. 23.

²¹Adolf Jülicher, Die Gleichnisreden Jesu (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1910), II, 638.

²²Joachim Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, translated from the German by S.H. Hooke (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), p. 17.

²³C.H. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (Revised Edition; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), pp. 18-19.

²⁴Jeremias, p. 19.

²⁵Dodd, p. 105.

²⁶Jeremias, pp. 21-23.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 23-31.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 31-36.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 36-52.

³⁰Ibid., p. 52.

³¹Ibid., pp. 52-70.

³²Ibid., pp. 70-74.

³³Ibid., p. 74.

³⁴Ibid., p. 75.

³⁵Ibid., p. 78.

³⁶Ibid., p. 80.

³⁷Dodd, pp. 120-121.

³⁸Jeremias, p. 69.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 80-159.

⁴⁰Dodd, pp. 148-149

⁴¹Scharlemann, p. 25.

⁴²C.F.D. Moule, "The Parables of the Jesus of History and the Lord of Faith," Religion in Education, XXVII-XXVIII (1959-1961), 63.

CHAPTER III

¹Mark 11:18.

²Isaiah 5:5-6 (RSV).

³Vincent Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1963), p. 473.

⁴Ibid., p. 474.

⁵C.E.B. Cranfield, The Gospel According to St. Mark, in The Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary (Cambridge: The University Press, 1963), p. 365.

⁶C.H. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (Revised edition; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), p. 100.

⁷Taylor, p. 475.

⁸Dodd, Parables, p. 99.

⁹Taylor, p. 476.

¹⁰C.H. Dodd, According to the Scriptures (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), pp. 99-100.

¹¹Taylor, pp. 476-477.

¹²Cranfield, p. 368.

¹³Wolfgang Trilling, Das Wahre Israel (Leipzig: St. Benno-Verlag, 1958), p. 45.

¹⁴Alan Hugh M'Neile, The Gospel According to St. Matthew (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1949), p. 309.

- ¹⁵Trilling, p. 62.
- ¹⁶Joachim Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, translated by S.H. Hooke (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), p. 56.
- ¹⁷M'Neile, p. 309.
- ¹⁸Trilling, p. 46.
- ¹⁹Ibid., p. 39.
- ²⁰Jeremias, p. 58. (also M'Neile, p. 310.)
- ²¹Taylor, p. 475.
- ²²Dodd, Parables, p. 99.
- ²³Günther Bornkamm, "End-Expectation and Church in Matthew," in Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth and Heinz Joachim Held, Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew, translated from the German by Percy Scott (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), pp. 20-21.
- ²⁴Ibid., p. 43.
- ²⁵Willoughby C. Allen, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew in The International Critical Commentary (Third edition; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), p. 232.
- ²⁶Bornkamm, p. 45.
- ²⁷Trilling, p. 42.
- ²⁸Ibid., p. 44.
- ²⁹Ibid., p. 45.
- ³⁰M'Neile, p. 311.
- ³¹Dodd, Scriptures, p. 100.
- ³²Trilling, pp. 37-38.

³³Ibid., p. 40.

³⁴Bornkamm, p. 39.

³⁵Georg Strecker, Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), p. 86.

³⁶Ibid., p. 90.

³⁷John Martin Creed, The Gospel According to St. Luke (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1960), pp. 238-239.

³⁸Ibid., p. 245.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰G.W. Lampe, "Luke," Peake's Commentary on the Bible, edited by Matthew Black (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1962), p. 838.

⁴¹Creed, p. 245.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Supra, p. 32.

⁴⁴Lampe, p. 839.

⁴⁵Creed, pp. 246-247.

⁴⁶Dodd, Parables, p. 97.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 96-97.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 100.

⁴⁹Jeremias, p. 56.

⁵⁰Dodd, Parables, pp. 100-101.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 101-102.

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