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### The Allegorical Method of Preaching on Narrative Texts

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**THE ALLEGORICAL METHOD OF PREACHING  
ON NARRATIVE TEXTS**

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**A Thesis Presented to  
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary  
Department of Practical Theology**

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**In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Bachelor of Divinity**

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**by  
Martin W. Brauer**

**May 1946**

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## The Allegorical Method of Preaching on Narrative Texts

### I. Some Hermeneutical Principles

From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.<sup>1</sup>

In these words we have the divinely intended function and use of Holy Scriptures. They have been given us for the purpose of revealing to us God's own plan of salvation. It is to this end that all Scripture has been written. Taking the Bible as a whole, we can consider it as the record of a historical process, that of the unfolding of the Kingdom of God on earth. From the very first book of Genesis to that of Revelation we find that the single purpose of all is simply to show man how God has sought to establish His Kingdom here on earth. The one person about whom all Scripture revolves, in whom all its ends and aims find fulfillment, is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of the World.

The objective salvation which has thus been revealed to us in the sacred writings must be made the subjective possession of all mankind. This task has been given to the church of Jesus Christ here on earth. The instrument for conveying

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1. 2 Tim. 3, 15 - 16.



to mankind this personal, subjective salvation is none other than the Word of God itself. In it we find not only the offer of salvation but the power to make it the personal possession of those who hear and accept it. It is the task of the church through its members and more specifically its preachers to expound the truths of Scriptures that men may learn to know their Savior.

The exposition of Scripture seems to be the Biblical method of preaching and teaching. In the Old Testament, Nehemiah 8: 7-8, we read:

And the Levites caused the people to understand the law; and the people stood in their place. So they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

Ray calls this expository preaching.<sup>2</sup> The readers were not satisfied to read the words themselves but went to special pains that their hearers received the proper understanding of the words read. When Peter preached to the crowds on Pentecost, he expounded to them the prophecy of Joel. Stephen employed the expository method when he addressed the audience on the day of his martyrdom, explaining to them the Scriptures concerning Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses. Philip taught the Ethiopian the proper understanding of the fifty-third chapter of the prophet Isaiah. And finally the Lord Himself, while on the way to Emmaus, "Beginning at Moses and the prophets, expounded to them in all the Scriptures the

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2. Jeff D. Ray, Expository Preaching, p. 48.



things concerning Himself." So clearly, so thoroughly did He expound that they later remarked, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" Thus, by Scriptural precedent, we can establish as the purpose of all preaching, the exposition of Scripture to the end that men might find in them eternal life through the Lord Jesus.

The art of interpreting Holy Scriptures is called exegesis. Any one desiring to be an exegete must possess a thorough knowledge of the principles of Hermeneutics, the theory behind Scriptural exposition. This is not all that he must possess. In order to have proper exegetical qualifications;

He must also have a good reasoning power, a keen judgment, a faithful memory, a knowledge of the original languages of the Bible; he should possess a certain measure of rhetorical, archeological and historical knowledge; he must be thoroughly familiar with the doctrines contained in the divine revelation; and he must be truly enlightened by the Spirit of God and be a true Christian at heart.

It is of course true that one need not possess all of these qualifications to find in Scripture the essential truths of salvation. Any one who is 'enlightened by the Spirit of God' and who is a Christian, honestly searching for the truth, can find in Scripture the facts of salvation and understand them sufficiently to become certain of his own salvation and even to convey this truth to another person. This will not suffice, however, for one who proposes to be a teacher or preacher of the Word. He must possess certain tools and be aware of certain principles of interpretation to arrive at the proper

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3. Ludwig Fuerbringer, Theological Hermeneutics, p. 3.



meaning of the text he proposes to expound.

The Holy Bible was written in human language and has come down to us in the form of words which are intended to convey definite ideas. Unfortunately for the exegete, words change in their meaning as they are used by men of many generations. It is therefore of primary importance that he ascertain what the meaning of the word was at the time it was written. A writer of a given period uses the word in a sense peculiar to his age. The meaning is often colored by association his own experiences, with the past experiences of his people. As a word becomes older, the long chain of associations becomes extremely complicated and the word in an original language has a meaning far different from the meaning associated with it in current usage. In order to understand the language of a writer one must establish the meaning of the words he uses.

The interpreter, especially, needs to keep in mind the difference, so frequently apparent, between the primitive signification of a word and that which it subsequently obtains.<sup>4</sup>

Every word has an original etymological meaning and a meaning in current popular usage. The two may be the same but often they are widely separated. The study of the etymology, the original meaning of the word, has certain practical values. It often gives one an idea as to why a certain word was chosen when other words having a similar meaning might have been used as well. This is especially true in the hapax-legomena, words peculiar to a certain writer. The etymology

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4. Milton S. Terry, Biblical Hermeneutics, p. 73.



of a word is often reflected in its current popular usage. Knowing this, a preacher can obtain a clearer understanding of the idea the word is supposed to convey. It must be stated, however, that the study of etymology does not always prove helpful in clearing up the intended meaning of a word as used by a given writer.

The chief task of the interpreter is to establish what is called in hermeneutics the usus loquendi, the meaning intended by the person using the word. In interpreting Scripture he is always dealing with words that were intended to convey a certain idea which the writer had in mind as he was using it.<sup>5</sup> Sometimes the writer uses a common word in a special and peculiar sense and then his own definitions must be accepted or the context must be studied before one can arrive at the precise meaning he had in mind.

It is a very simple task to find the usus loquendi when the writer explains the word as in 2 Tim. 3, 17, where the word ἀπτιος, perfect, complete, is defined by the words, "That a man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work."<sup>6</sup> The immediate context also aids one in finding out any peculiar usage of words by a given writer.

Unless there are sufficient reasons for believing otherwise, the exegete must assume that the writer used his words in the generally accepted usage of his day. It is evident that a writer in addressing his people would use language that they

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5. Fuerbringer, op. cit., p. 9.

6. Terry, op. cit., p. 160.



were accustomed to hear and would understand without additional explanation. The general use of a word may differ with special groups of people or in a given locality. Here one must make special note of the people to whom the writer is speaking and of his own particular background. When the writers of the epistles address the Jews, Hebraisms often influence their vocabulary. To the Jewish people the word ἰδαντήριος, translated 'propitiation', had a very significant meaning. It was closely associated with the ceremony on the annual day of atonement when the priest sprinkled the blood of the expiatory victim on the cover of the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies. When Jesus was called the propitiation for their sins, the Jews immediately thought of Him in terms of this traditional ceremony on the day of atonement.<sup>7</sup> The exegete who has not caught this peculiar meaning of the word ἰδαντήριος, has missed one of the most meaningful figures used in the New Testament.

Occasionally the words used in Scripture are used figuratively. Such is the case of the metaphors used in Luke 13,32: "Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected." also in 1 Peter 2, 5: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house." Here the exegete must understand the point of comparison and be very careful to avoid going beyond this point. The rule reads, Ne tropus ultra tertium. This

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7. Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek - English Lexicon of the New Testament, "ἰδαντήριος", p. 301.



rule also applies to the extended metaphor, the parable.

Metaphors, allegories, parables, and symbols are divinely chosen forms of setting forth the oracles of God, and we must not suppose their meaning to be so vague and uncertain as to be past finding out. . . All figures of speech are founded upon some resemblance or relation which different objects bear to one another.<sup>8</sup>

In order to arrive at the proper relation between these objects, one must have a thorough knowledge of their setting and know just how the writer and the people for whom he was writing saw them. To these people the meaning was clear and obvious because they lived in the world and surroundings from which these objects were chosen.

To arrive at the meaning of a simile is no problem since they are specifically written to illustrate the meaning of the author. This might be illustrated by Matthew 17, 2, where the appearance of Jesus after His transfiguration is described. "His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as the light."

The parable is closely related to the simile. In fact, the parable is a simile or comparison. The point of difference lies in this that a simile may be a comparison of imaginary or real objects while the parable is confined to the real. "Its imagery always embodies a narrative which is true to the facts and experiences of human life."<sup>9</sup> The parable also differs from the allegory. The parable often does not contain its explanation within itself. The narrator or reader must go outside the story itself for his explanation. The allegory,

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8. Terry, *op. cit.* p. 160.

9. *Ibid.*



as an extended metaphor, contains its interpretation within itself. <sup>10</sup> Terry lists three hermeneutical principles which should serve as a guide to the interpreter of parables.

First, we should determine the historical occasion and aim of the parable; secondly, we should make an accurate analysis of the subject matter, and observe the nature and properties of the things employed as imagery in the similitude; and thirdly, we should interpret the several parts with strict reference to the general scope and design of the whole, so as to preserve a harmony of proportions, maintain the unity of all the parts, and make prominent the central truth. <sup>11</sup>

The fundamental rule in interpreting parables is that we be very careful not to go beyond the tertium comparationes, the intended point of comparison.

Dr. A. L. Graebner quotes Dr. Lieber as saying:

Every man or body of persons making use of words, does so in order to convey a certain meaning; and to find this precise meaning is the objective of all interpretation. To have two meanings in view is equivalent to having no meaning. The interpretation of two meanings is an absurdity. <sup>12</sup>

In hermeneutics we have this statement to express this truth. Sensus literalis unus est. This is a most important rule to observe. Upon it depends the acceptance of Scripture as a statement of clear, unequivocal facts or a book of ambiguous parables and allegories whose interpretation is left to the whims of individual imagination. This principle holds good even where there might be more than one opinion as to the proper interpretation. Those passages which have been interpreted in

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10. Ibid., 188.

11. Ibid., 189.

12. A. L. Graebner, "Varient Interpretations", Theological Quarterly, VI, (June 1902), p. 110.



various ways are called *cruces interpretum*.<sup>13</sup> Because men are unable to ascertain the proper meaning due to the words or constructions used, it does not follow that there can be more than one interpretation.

The intended meaning of any text can be but one. Scripture is nowhere a waxen nose to be molded or shaped at will, but a sure prophetic word, fit to be a thoroughly reliable source and norm of doctrine and rule of life.<sup>14</sup>

In a similar vein Reu quotes Luther as saying:

The Holy Spirit is the simplest of all writers in heaven and on earth; hence His words cannot have any other than a simple meaning, which we call the written or spoken sense. The Scriptures cannot have a double sense, but only the single sense expressed in the words.<sup>15</sup>

In cases where the *sensus literalis* is not exactly clear, the exegete has a number of approaches that might lead to a solution of his problem. First of all the context, immediate and remote, may give a clue as to the intended meaning. The immediate context always takes precedence over the more remote. Here one must study the construction of the sentence and the syntactical connection of the words connected with the particular word or idea under discussion. In the more remote context the interpreter studies the paragraphs preceeding and following his object and determines the logical relation of one part to the other.

Many a passage of Scripture will not be understood at all without the help afforded by the context, for many a sentence derives all its point and force from the connection in which it stands. So again, a whole section may depend for its proper exposition, upon our understanding of the scope and plan of the writer's argument.<sup>16</sup>

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13. Fuerbringer, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

14. Graebner, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

15. Terry, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

16. Reu, *op. cit.*, p. 321.



The context often helps a reader to understand just which parts of his discourse a writer intends to emphasize. This emphasis is indicated by the structure of the sentence, the repetition of the same or similar terms, using pronouns in sections which would be intelligible without such an insertion and the use of many words expressing the same thought. The latter is illustrated in 1 Pet. 1, 4, where the apostle heaps a number of adjectives conveying similar ideas to describe the inheritance preserved in heaven for Christians.<sup>17</sup>

Often an idea expressed by a writer is more clearly stated by himself or other writers in other parts of Scriptures. These parallel passages must be carefully studied. Sometimes these parallels are mere word parallels, i. e., passages in which the same word is used but the idea is quite different. If one proposes to use parallel passages to clarify a given textual problem, he must be sure that a real parallel exists. The context of the parallel must be consulted to establish the validity of its use as such. There are certain passages which are without doubt real parallels. Such cases exist where the Bible itself testifies to the fact, e. g.:

between a parable and its explanation; between a historical account and a reference made to it; between a prophecy and an account of its fulfillment; and between a quotation and the passages quoted.<sup>18</sup>

We believe that Scriptures do not err. It is therefore impossible to accept the interpretation of any passage that does not agree with its parallels. This agreement that exists

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17. Fuerbringer, op. cit., p. 14.

18. Ibid., p. 17.



between passages treating the same thought is called the analogia Scripturae. This does not mean that all passages treating a given subject speak with the same degree of clarity or completeness but it does mean that those passages which do speak clearly must serve as the guide in properly interpreting the more obscure passages.

Some what related to the analogia Scripturae is the analogia fidei. The latter is based on the inspiration of the entire Bible and demands that any interpretation that we choose must at no time contradict a doctrine of Scripture clearly taught in other passages. If, however, a passage makes a very clear statement that we seemingly cannot harmonize with other clearly stated truths, we must not turn the rule against itself and attempt to change or by logic attempt to reconcile the apparent contradiction. In view of his weakened capacity for comprehending spiritual things, the Christian accepts both statements as being true and awaits with patience the day when he will be able to understand them.<sup>19</sup>

The last approach to be considered as an aid in establishing the proper sense of a given text is the study of the historical setting. This is very closely related to the first suggestion, the study of the immediate and remote contexts. The historical setting involves such things as the circumstances under which the writer was doing his work, the purpose of his writing, the conditions in which his addressees were living, and the general plan of the entire book.

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19. Ibid., p. 200.



## II. The Homiletical Treatment of a Text

When a preacher reads a text to his people he has given them a promise, the promise that some how or the other what he has to say has a definite connection with the text he has read. This text must be the source of his discourse. It must provide the inspiration for his preaching. It must be the guide to lead his hearers to whatever goal he has set up for them. The preacher's first duty, then, is to do justice to the text that lies before him.

Whatever the text that has been chosen, it must come to its full rights in the sermon. The sermon dare not deal with matters that have nothing to do with the text; that would be to turn a Word of God into a lying sign-board, to use it as a mere stop gap or superficial adornment. Nor dare the text become merely a motto or title of the sermon, or serve as a point of departure from which the preacher advances to the elaboration of his own ideas, the springboard for a plunge into the depths or shallows of his own thought.<sup>1</sup>

This states quite clearly that the text, if there is to be one at all, must serve a definite purpose. To this end the preacher must carefully choose his texts that he be not tempted to violate the purpose of his text in any way.

There are good reasons why a preacher should choose a text of some kind as a basis for his sermon. In the first place, he is standing before his people as a man of God, and as one who is to bring them a message of God. This message must, of course, come from the Bible. He must be able to convince his hearers that the message that he is bringing them is not the product of his own thinking but actually the wisdom and

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1. Reu, op. cit., p. 317.



counsel of God. The only way he can do that is by preaching from a text. In preaching from a well chosen text the preacher is not only giving authority to his preaching but is also aiding his hearers in the task of understanding God's Word. Preachers have already undertaken to preach on whole chapters of the Bible which involved merely a reading of the selection with explanation and application of its various truths. Although a preacher can hardly do justice to such a long selection in the brief time allotted to him in his pulpit, he without doubt could accomplish much in the line of teaching his people how to read and understand the Word of God. The text is also helpful in unifying the preacher's sermon. If a preacher must confine himself to the central thought of his text, it is obvious that the sermon will possess a degree of unity not otherwise obtainable. This type of preaching will make a stronger and more lasting impression on the mind of the hearer because he will be required to retain fewer independent thoughts and those that he hears will make a single, powerful impression that is less apt to be forgotten.

How is the preacher to fulfill his duty as an expositor of the Scriptures? First of all, he must be convinced that the text he has chosen actually has material that is usable in his sermon. It must possess divine truth that actually will minister to the edification of his congregation.<sup>2</sup> Knowing that there is something in his text that his hearers must know, he will seek the necessary divine guidance and enlighten-

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2. Ibid., p. 339.



ment in searching out this truth. Having found this truth, he will resolve to stick to it and seek every possible means of bringing it to his hearers in such a way that they will receive the maximum spiritual benefit from it.

The Scriptures have a message that is applicable to our modern way of living. The very fact that the Word of God has been preserved to us under divine guidance is evidence that it must have some meaning for the spiritual and social problems of our day. In order to find this meaning in his text the preacher must organize his ideas and find in them some central thought. This central thought must be the basis of his interpretation.

He must take the Word of God, whose meaning in the past he has ascertained, set it unaltered and unabridged, with all its winsomeness and all its severity in the midst of the present, and let it say to the men of today what it said to the men of the past.<sup>3</sup>

Man has not changed. The problems that disturbed his spiritual life during the times of the apostles and prophets are essentially the same as the problems that perplex him today. If the Word was able to solve the problems then, it should be able to solve the problems of today. It must still be a valid source of truth. Why is it, then, that Gospel preaching in our day has not achieved its results in a greater measure: Jeff D. Ray seems to have caught hold of the social aspects of this problem pretty well. He says:

The tragedy of much of our preaching Jesus, is that

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3. Ibid., p. 381.



it is done in such a vague and vapid way that those whom we persuade to professedly trust and follow <sup>him</sup> show little if any change in their lives. As a result it is notoriously true that out in the work-a-day world it is difficult and generally impossible to distinguish, judging by their attitudes and conduct, between a church-member and a rank outsider. . . Gospel preaching presses home on the thought and conscience of men the vital question, 'What would Jesus do and what would Jesus say if He faced our social and economic problems?' In these matters, the preacher's business is not to present some nostrum of his own that he has learned from a study of psychology or economics. The preacher's business is to bring the people face to face with the question, 'What would Jesus say and do if He were an American citizen in the year 1940?'

In speaking of man's spiritual condition, his relation to God, we would have to say, 'How would Jesus diagnose man's trouble? What would He do to restore to man the spiritual life that has been lost?' The answers to these questions are to be found in the Word of God. It is the job of the preacher to pray earnestly for divine guidance as he operates with his text in search of the answers to these questions.

The preacher must study, turn up the fallow ground, winnow the seed with care, cultivate with discriminating wisdom, confident of the early and latter rains. His words must be heated with enthusiasm and fervor. He must put all he is into them. The attendance of an auditor is not arrested by a feeble grip. The Holy Spirit does not operate through an unwilling enthusiasm.<sup>5</sup>

It is not always easy to find the proper interpretation of a given passage of Scripture. In the Epistles and many parts of the Gospels, the meaning is often quite clear and the exposition is accordingly quite simple. They can readily be applied to the lives of people today. Narrative texts

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4. Ray, op. cit., p. 55.

5. H. E. Truex, "Preachers as Interpreters", The Review and Expositor, XXXI, (April, 1934), p. 193.



less readily lend themselves to simple exposition and application. The stories of the Old Testament some times seem to have a very remote if any practical value for the life of the world today. Some of the miracle stories, the stories of Jesus while carrying on His pastoral work, and His parables present difficult problems in this respect.

There are a number of reasons for these difficulties. Old Testament narratives are records of incidents that took place under circumstances far different from those of our people today. The Jews were under the ceremonial law. They were a theocratic nation. Their view of the Messiah was that of a people looking forward to the coming of one long expected, but who often seemed very far away. Also the stories of the New Testament find a setting much different from modern society. Their characters were also under the influence of the old ceremonial law. The gentiles were under the influence of many pagan philosophies. These circumstances created the teaching situations in which the Lord Jesus found Himself and it is to these circumstances that Jesus adjusted His teaching. Yet we know that the lessons taught are equally applicable to life situations as we find them today. It is the job of the preacher to find these lessons and discover how they apply to the lives of his hearers.

In the attempt to apply these narrative texts to the lives of their hearers, many preachers have resorted to the use of allegorical interpretation. These preachers assume that the Word of God carries besides its obvious meaning, some hidden



mystical, symbolical, or figurative meaning which they feel must be interpreted, or they employ such devices for producing a helpful application.

According to Taylor, allegorical interpretations became current in the fifth century before Christ. By the time of Augustus allegory had become the popular thing to do if any one wanted to be classed as a writer of any worth.<sup>6</sup> At the time of Christ, Philo of Alexandria applied the allegorical method to his interpretations of the Pentateuch. His interpretations were used by many of the later church fathers. Typical of his work is his interpretation of the four rivers of Eden as representing four virtues, prudence, temperance, courage, justice. These four stem from the main stream, the wisdom of God.<sup>7</sup>

The perfectors of the allegorical system were the Alexandrians, Clement and Origen. Origen systematized the use of allegory. To him all Scripture had an allegorical meaning but not all of it had a 'bodily' or literal meaning.<sup>8</sup> According to him the Scriptures had a three fold sense. They conformed to the three parts of man, his body, his soul, and his spirit. The three senses were literal, moral, and mystical or allegorical. His interpretation of the foxes in the Song of Songs is typical. In the second sense they represent the sins of the individual, in the third sense they represent the

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6. Henry O. Taylor, The Classical Heritage of the Middle Ages, p. 99.

7. Ibid., p. 995.

8. Ibid., p. 103.



heresies which disturb the church.

Among the other users of allegory are Rabanus, Augustine, and Honorius of Autun of whom we have selections that will be used later in this paper. Commenting on the use of allegory by the Fathers Taylor says:

The allegorical faculty with the fathers was dogmatic and theological; ingenious in devising useful interpretations, but oblivious to all reasonable propriety in the meaning which it twisted into the text; controversial necessities readily overrode the rational and moral requirements of the 'historical' or 'literal' meaning.<sup>9</sup>

The reasons for using allegory are varied. Cave says that the allegory was used by some for apologetic purposes. Philo used it to explain the anthropomorphic expressions used in the human views of God.<sup>10</sup> Taylor calls it:

that conservative religious progress which avoids a breach with the past and clings to the statements of the ancient seers.<sup>11</sup>

A simpler explanation for the use of the allegory is inclination of preachers to find something mysterious and strange in the Bible. Operating on the theory that the inspired language of the Bible was an inexhaustible mine of hidden treasures of fancy, they delved into it at will and the more novel and ingenious their interpretation, the more authoritative his exegesis.

He was a prince of preachers who could invent the interpretation least likely to suggest itself to the common reader or to be supported by his common sense.<sup>12</sup>

This would seem to be the motive behind the various groups of

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9. Henry O. Taylor, The Mediaeval Mind, p. 69.  
 10. Alfred Cave, An Introduction to Theology, p. 319.  
 11. Henry O. Taylor, Classical Heritage, p. 97.  
 12. Austin Phelps, The Theory of Preaching, p. 171.



people who emphasize the millenium and the second coming of Christ in their theology. In finding significance for the various numbers and mystical words they operate with pre-conceived notions and arrive at the most unscriptural interpretations imaginable.

Preachers need not have millennialistic or chiliastic notions to interpret narrative texts with preconceived ideas. Many preachers have in their mind the subject of their sermon and then proceed to find a text. Many such texts are chosen on the basis of some striking phrase in a narrative that seems to fit their theme and thus a completely distorted exposition of the text results.

Perhaps the most common cause for the use of allegory is the failure of pastors to study their text and find its true meaning. Taking into their hands a text with which they think they are quite familiar, they can see only the obvious. In an attempt to make these truths appealing and novel to their hearer, they must resort to spiritualizing or allegorical methods of interpretation. In defense of this method Spurgeon appeals to "a jury of practical, successful preachers, who are not theorizers but men actually in the field." He then concludes:

We who have not high culture, or profound learning, or enchanting eloquence to boast of, have deemed it wise to use the very method which the grandees have proscribed; for we find it one of the best ways of keeping out of the rut of dull formality, and it yields us a sort of salt with which to give flavor to unpalatable truth.<sup>13</sup>

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13. D. O. Fuller, Spurgeon's Lectures to His Students, p. 82.



Akin to this argument for the use of allegory is the fear of preachers that they will not have sufficient sermon material from their text if they do not resort to allegorizing. It is true that it requires much more concentrated study and effort on the part of the preacher if he wants to avoid this artful device, but both he and his hearers will profit from it.

All forms of allegory need not be avoided. In fact, even the Bible uses it at times. The parables of Jesus have a certain amount of allegory in them, although they usually are not classified as such. Strictly speaking, the allegory carries its comparison through the entire narrative while the parable has usually only one or at most only a very few points in which the narrative and spiritual elements have a point of comparison.

In Galatians 4, 24 Paul refers to the story of Hagar and Ishmael as an allegory. Paul is here discussing the matter of the ceremonial law with the Jews. It seems that they accused Paul of wrong teaching.<sup>14</sup> They pointed him to the covenant agreement of the Old Testament. Paul refers them now to this story, which:

points to the two covenants, the covenant of the Law and the covenant of grace, Hagar standing for Mount Sion and Sarah standing for the heavenly Jerusalem. It indicates that all who place themselves on the Law as the means of salvation will ultimately be cast out and not reach the goal that the children of God are striving for, the Jerusalem above.<sup>15</sup>

How are we to look upon this allegory? First of all, we must

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14. Wm. Arndt, "The Preacher and Allegorical Interpretation," Concordia Theological Monthly, II, (Sept. 1931), p. 686.

15. Ibid.



remember that it was an allegory inspired by the Holy Spirit. It was His own interpretation of one of His own writings, which He certainly has a right to do. This case is one in which the Holy Spirit chose one of His own writings as a specially ordained illustration for the passage in question. Thus the passage in Genesis 21 does not have a double meaning and the hermeneutical principle, Sensus literalis unus est, is not violated. In his discussion of this passage Dr. Arndt also reminds us that when Scripture speaks to us, it uses human language and that we must assume this language to be used in its native sense unless we are specifically told that it has parabolic or allegorical meaning.

You have no right to be the interpreter of your own speech. Let us, then, not fail to grant the same right Holy Scriptures.<sup>16</sup>

On the subject of indirect application Dr. Reu mentions the symbolical, typical, and tropological interpretations of Scriptures. The texts of the New Testament may have either a tropological or symbolical meaning. The tropological interpretation assumes that what has happened at one time or other in the text is an expression of the unchanging ἰδέσ, the permanent and consistent nature of God or man. For example, the story of the Centurion of Capernaum tells us something of the true nature of faith as it exists in all true Christians. This type of interpretation applies especially to the miracles, which belong to the sphere of historical reality, and also to the

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16. Ibid. p. 690.



stories that tell us of the pastoral work of Jesus among the people. The story of the conversation with the Samaritan woman shows how Jesus operates in trying to win people for His Kingdom.

Some times, Reu says, certain New Testament texts permit a symbolical application. This takes some external event and considers it to be symbolical of some spiritual experience of the Church or of some Christian. Reu warns, however, that it would never do to make this the only meaning or even the chief meaning of the miracles of Jesus since this would place them in the category of myths and fables.

Old Testament texts permit one to use a typical interpretation occasionally. In such a case a particular passage might prefigure Christ and His gifts, the members of His Kingdom, or the development of His church as a whole. In Genesis 12, 1 - 4, Abraham's call reveals the riches of God's grace and faithfulness which is also reflected in our call to faith. In Genesis 15, 1 - 6, we find Abraham as an example for Christians in times of tribulation. We must be careful, however, not to find a type in these stories where there actually is no type. This would be forcing upon it false meaning and exegesis.<sup>17</sup>

Whatever form of indirect application is used, the same rule applies that must be used in direct application.

It must add nothing new to the text, but simply exhibit and set in operation the divine truth contained in it. It must, indeed, build a bridge from the past to the present;

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17. Reu., op. cit., pp. 366 - 373.



but this bridge must be straight and the road leading from it must be a direct continuation of the road leading to it on the farther side.<sup>18</sup>

Parables present a problem of interpretation that is very similar to that of the narrative texts discussed above. The first thing that we must remember is that the parable was presented for a very specific purpose. This purpose was clearly fixed in the mind of Jesus when He told the parable. In order to give the proper interpretation to this parable then, we must understand why it was spoken. In Luke 18, 1, Jesus tells us the purpose of the parable. "He told them a parable, to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart." In verse 9 we read, "He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others."

The purpose of the parables in the group where we find the story of the Prodigal Son is not so clear. Here we must make a careful study of the context and find some clues from the situation, the nature of the previous conversation, the type of people, the details of the parable, and the response of the people to its telling before we can establish the purpose of the selection in question. In the parables of the Vineyard and the Marriage of the King's Son, the purpose is still more difficult to understand.

Having established the purpose of the parable we are now ready to discover just how the parable intends to contribute something to the solution of the particular problem involved.

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18. Ibid., p. 373.



We must find the exact point of comparison. It is to be remembered that a parable is not an allegory and all the points in the narrative are not pertinent to the purpose of its telling. The point at which the spiritual and temporal aspects have something in common is called the tertium comparationes. It is most important that this point be clearly ascertained to prevent extending the meaning of the parable farther than the Holy Spirit intended. From this it is evident that we cannot place any particular emphasis on every detail of the parable though they are not there without purpose. They are present to make a complete story and occasionally they may furnish a clue to the proper understanding of the central point, but they are never to be pressed into service for the purpose of revealing some hidden spiritual meaning.

Albert E. Barnett lists three general principles for the interpretation of parables that we might well include in this discussion:

1. It is assumed that a parable has a single lesson that it illustrates. The details of the story have no separate meaning apart from the central teaching point. Allegory is rejected as a legitimate principle of interpretation.
2. The evangelists understood and employed the parables in terms of the message they themselves wanted to deliver. What the parable meant to the several evangelists is gathered from the context in which it is given. The same parable might thus be understood in a variety of ways. Accordingly attention is given to all accounts of the materials.
3. Jesus' message was primarily intended for his immediate hearers. The effort is made, insofar as it appears possible, to discover what He meant by the parables in the context of His own ministry. A final inquiry, of necessity left to the reader, would have to do with the present day uses of the parables for education in religion.<sup>19</sup>

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19. Albert E. Barnett, Understanding the Parables of Our Savior, pp. 16 - 17.



In general, when we discuss narrative texts we must keep in mind first of all that the text is a record of historical fact based upon actual cause and effect life situations. This must be clearly presented to the hearer so that the sense not only the fact becomes clear to him. The hearer must understand that this event has a definite moral and spiritual implication as far as his own life is concerned. Otherwise the Holy Spirit would not have recorded the story. It is the preacher's duty to aid his hearers in finding these facts. In making any explanation or application of the story the preacher must keep in mind the point of comparison and carefully avoid spiritualizing on details that actually have no spiritual implications. It is the tertium comparationes that controls the entire treatment of all narrative texts.<sup>20</sup>

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20. Reu, op. cit., p. 378.



### III. The Exposition of Old Testament Texts

It is the purpose of this thesis to discuss some of the problems that arise in connection with preaching on narrative texts. The allegorical method of preaching is to be particularly noticed. For the sake of convenience, the discussion of texts has been arbitrarily divided into three groups, first a discussion of Old Testament narratives, secondly New Testament narratives and finally of the parables of Jesus. Many of the problems that are presented in the first discussion will re-appear in the material for the following two chapters.

We have already mentioned some of the facts that a preacher must keep in mind when he tries to interpret texts chosen from the Old Testament. The main task is some how to fit Christ into the Old Testament picture and to make the Old Testament a living book worthy of application to the lives of Christian people today.

In a desperate attempt to draw the concept of Christianity into the stories of the Old Testament preachers yield to the temptation of using metaphorical or symbolical language to describe the life of Christ, the fortunes of the Church, or the life of the Christian himself. Many pastors have chosen stories of the Bible built around certain characters and events and used them as texts for sermons in which they attempt to discuss some area of Christian living. The result is a distorted exegesis of the text. Meanings have been imposed on



it which are entirely foreign to its true meaning and purpose. Such for instance is the case of the preacher who chose Genesis 7, 18 as his text for sermon in which he said:

The wonderful story of the ark in the Noachian flood pictures unto us the fate of the Christian Church in this sinful and wicked world. Like as Noah's ark was tossed about by mighty tempests, and covered by the mighty rolling waves of the turbulent flood, so the Church of Christ must battle with the heavy winds and rolling waves of this unbelieving and ungodly world. But as the ark went upon the face of the waters, and as it finally reached Mt. Ararat in safety, so, beloved fellow-Christians, God's Ark will finally reach the beautiful summit of the celestial Ararat; for the storms and waves of the wicked world cannot sink it. To this comforting fact let me now direct your devout attention. The theme for my present discourse shall therefore be by the assistance of the Holy Spirit and in accordance with our text: "The Ark of the Lord on the Turbulent Waters of this World." I. It is tossed about by furious tempests and roaring waves, but II. It cannot sink because the Almighty Lord Himself is in it.<sup>1</sup>

To many people this would sound like a good sermon and it may indeed have served to the edification of the hearers. The point of our criticism is this. Although all that the preacher said about the church was indeed true, his statements were not "in accordance with our text." In the entire story of the flood nothing is said or intimated about the Church of Christ and its well-being here on earth. If the preacher had no other Scripture passages for proof, he could not prove or substantiate a single one of his statements about the church from the information given him in the text he has chosen.

The same preacher has used the story of the flood to much

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1. J. H. Hartenberger, Plain Sermons, p. 96.



better advantage in another sermon based on the entire story as told us in Genesis 7, 11 - 24. In this sermon he has the following paragraph:

The King of Majesty Tremendous changes not. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. "e will come once more in judgment, at the end of this present world. He will come in just anger to pronounce the judgment of eternal damnation upon all those who did not accept Him as the God of their salvation, as their one and only Savior. This visible universe He will destroy, not by another flood of water, but by a rain of fire, for it is written, "The day of the Lord," that is the day of judgment, "will come as the thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with a fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are there in shall be burned up."<sup>2</sup>

The content of this sermon is entirely different from that of the other sermon based on this same text. The former sermon was an attempt to use this story as source material for something which could by no means be drawn from it. The latter sermon was a simple, natural exposition of the text as it stood. Any person who read the text for himself could have arrived at the same conclusion.

Many of the characters of the Old Testament have been adduced as types of Christ or their deeds have been suggested as figures of the work of Christ. David has often been subjected to such treatment. In 1 Samuel 30 we have a discussion of David's battle with the Amalekites. The Lord so prospered the enemies in a previous battle that the Israelites had suffered great losses. In this battle David was able to lead his armies to victory and to regain all that had been lost previously.

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2. Ibid., p. 449.



In this episode of David's life a preacher has found a type of Christ's work.

All the booty was practically David's spoil, but there was a part of it which was not recovered, but was a clear gain. They recovered all they had lost, and over and above there was a surplus of spoil from the defeated foe. Now, in the great battle of Christ on our behalf, he has not only given us back what we lost, but he has given us what Adam in his perfection never had. And I want you to dwell upon that, because this part of it is peculiarly the Lord's spoil. Those good things which we now possess, over and above what we lost by sin, come to us by Jesus. <sup>3</sup>

Here again we have thoughts that are truly evangelical. They express fine Christian truths. But they do not find their Scriptural basis in the words, "This is David's Spoil," which the preacher had chosen as the text for his sermon.

Among the characters set up by preachers as a type of Christ and His activity is that of Joseph. His suffering at the hands of his brothers, his service to the people of Egypt, his forgiving spirit toward his brothers, all have been used to typify the Lord Jesus in His work. Spurgeon uses the phrase "Joseph opened all the storehouses," taken from Genesis 41, 56 and makes the following comparison:

Remark the bounty of providence in raising up Joseph to save the house of Israel, yea, and the whole world, from famishing. Then note the greatness of sovereign grace in raising up Jesus to save His people, and to be God's salvation to the ends of the earth. Joseph had beforehand filled the vast storehouses, and our text shows us how he used the store -- "Joseph opened all the storehouses." How much more has been done by Jesus! Oh, to be partakers of His grace! . . . Joseph did but sell while Jesus gives without money. Will you not come to Him for heavenly bread?<sup>4</sup>

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3. Charles Spurgeon, Sermons, vol. XIX, p. 449.  
4. D. O. Fuller, Spurgeon's Sermon Notes, p. 19.



Jesus is often called the Lamb that was slain for sinners. This figure comes from the offering of the lamb in the Passover feast. To characterize the suffering and death of Jesus as that of a lamb being led to the slaughter is in accord with Scriptural usage of the term. There is a time when this figure can be carried too far. While the children of Israel were preparing for their flight out of Egypt, they were to eat a lamb "and if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next unto his house take it according to the number of souls." This is found in Exodus 12, 3 - 4. A preacher proposed the theme, "Too little for the Lamb" and made the following admonition:

The lamb was to be eaten, all eaten, eaten by all, and eaten at once. The Lord Jesus is to be received into the soul as food, and this is to be done with a whole Christ, by each one of His people, and done just now.

The wisdom of Solomon received a great deal of publicity. Even the queen of Sheba had heard so much of it that she decided to make a trip to Jerusalem to investigate and find out for herself if this man were as wise as he was reputed to be. "And when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart." (1 Kings 10,2) The entire tenth chapter of first Kings is a description of how Solomon displayed his wealth and power to the admiring queen and yet a sermon was written on it entitled: "Heart-Communing." The writer struck a comparison between Solomon as a wise counselor to whom one might come for aid and Jesus who is infinitely more



wise than Solomon and one with whom we ought to commune "all that is in our heart."<sup>6</sup> It is surely true that Christian people ought to commune with their God, but this text does not tell us anything about it.

In the endeavor to find striking expressions in which to couch their eloquent pleas for righteousness, sympathy, and other Christian virtues, preachers search the Scriptures for passages or short phrases that in themselves seem to express the idea that intend to get across to their people. Without any regard for the context and intended meaning of the words, such expressions are chosen as texts for their sermons.

During the time of Isaiah a group of representatives of the king of Babylon came to King Hezekiah who with a great deal of pride showed them his possessions. When Isaiah came to him he asked, "What have they seen in thy house?" On the basis of the king's reply Isaiah reminded him of the coming Babylonian captivity in which all the things which these men saw in Hezekiah's house would be taken away. A preacher of our day has drawn from this question this advice:

To show you, with all the advantages and adversities our wartime homes are experiencing, both the danger of harboring unbelief in your homes and the benediction of having Christ abide in your households, I ask you to look into your hearts as well as the contents of your rooms, and with Heaven's help to answer honestly this old but ever vital question taken as our text from the Second Book of Kings, "What have they seen in thine house?"<sup>7</sup>

An appeal for brotherly admonition has been based on the

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6. Ibid., p. 43.

7. Walter A. Maier, America Turn to Christ, p. 33.



story of the angels coming to bring Lot out of his city when it was about to be destroyed. After gathering his family together, Lot was to leave the next morning. "When the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot." (Genesis 19,15) From this action of the angels it is concluded that the righteous ought to be hastened in the matter of obedience to their Lord because of the weakness of their flesh. This is to be done by reminding them of their obligations. We are also to hasten the sinners who are apt to linger. It is our job to hasten them wince we have the necessary arguments, being conscious of their danger and the necessity of an immediate decision.<sup>8</sup>

Although the entire story of Lot and his affairs is a reminder of our duty toward our fellow men, this particular phrase as chosen by Spurgeon is in itself no admonition to this end.

A portion of the story of Job has been well used by Spurgeon in a discussion of hypocrisy. In the 27th chapter of this book, Job discusses the hopeless situation of the hypocrite. In the course of his conversation he places this question, "Will he always call upon God?" A very appropriate application is made of this question in these words:

A hypocrite may be a very neat imitation of a Christian. He professes to know God, to converse with Him, to be dedicated to his service, and to invoke His protection; he even practices prayer or at least feigns it. Yet the cleverest counterfeit fails somewhere, and may be discovered

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8. D. O. Fuller, op. cit., p. 15.)



by certain signs. The test is here, "Will he always call upon God?"<sup>9</sup>

The question, "Who is on the Lord's side?" has been used to good advantage also by this preacher. It is taken from the account in Exodus 32, 26, where Moses purges his flock after many had defected and polluted themselves with the sin of idolatry. To the Israelites it was a moment of decision and only the tribe of Levi decided to stay on the Lord's side. Every preacher, every Christian, must make a decision. The conflict in which they find themselves is a difficult one, but if they choose to be on the Lord's side, they have an assurance of blessing. Those who decide otherwise, or try to be neutrals will have to bow under a curse.<sup>10</sup>

The children of Israel provide us with many object lessons in Christian living. Very often their actions are typical of the people in our world today and God's reaction to their conduct can give us a warning. The murmuring and complaining of the Children of Israel against their leaders and against God are well known to all students of the Bible. In Numbers 11, 1, we have the statement, "And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord." It forms a basis for discussing the dissatisfied spirit and how it displeases the Lord, how it thinks it would find pleasure in things denied it, and how one would do well to reconsider his lot in the world, realizing that actually all has been very well with him.<sup>11</sup>

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10. Ibid., p. 24.

11. Ibid., p. 27.



A very fine discussion of "Moral Inability" has been based on the situation described in Joshua 24:19. Joshua pleads with his people to turn from the idolatrous practices which they had been pursuing for God had manifested much goodness unto them. This goodness was shown in the victories of Israel over their enemies. Joshua reminds them that in their present state, having forsaken Jehovah and turned to strange gods, "Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is an holy God and he is a jealous God." The following remarks are a good application of this story to Christian living today.

God's word knows us better than we know ourselves. God's omniscience sees each part of our being as an anatomist sees the various portions of the body, and He therefore knows our moral and spiritual nature most thoroughly. . . Unrenewed men cannot serve God. It is not in their nature, but in their fallen nature; not of God, but of sin. . . This truth will drive men to despair which is most desirable and salutary because it discourages men from an impossible task. . . It discourages from every other way of self-salvation, and thus shuts men up to faith in the Lord Jesus. "Nothing better can befall them."<sup>12</sup>

The stories of the Old Testament present very life-like situations. Their characters are presented to us in their natural walks of life. They present scenes that are common to our own ways of living such as marriages, burials, births, business transactions, and other situations that arise when people live in a community and have social intercourse. These stories have often been used as the basis for certain principles and rules governing parallel situations in our own lives. Although the principles established might be perfectly sound, they cannot possibly be drawn from the text chosen because of

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12. Ibid., p. 31.)



some unusual circumstances surrounding it or because of the peculiar customs of the day that placed the event in a different light when compared with a similar event in our own lives.

In Genesis 24, 50 - 60, we have a record of the scene that took place when Rebekah consented to go with the servant of Abraham to become Isaac's wife. Using this as a text a number of conclusions were drawn which were applied as rules for a proper marriage of Christian people today.

When she declared her willingness to have Isaac for her husband, she had entered the holy estate of matrimony in the sight of God; she was married to Isaac. . . From these words of our text two things are manifest. In the first place it is manifest that Rebekah did not betroth herself to Isaac without the consent of her parents. . . In the second place we learn from our text that Rebekah was not compelled to betroth herself to Isaac, for her people asked her: "Wilt thou go with this man?" and she said, "I will go." She voluntarily consented to enter the estate of holy matrimony with Isaac. . . Secret marriages or secret engagements, that is, an engagement or a marriage without the knowledge of the parents, are null and void before God. Children must not betroth themselves or get married without the knowledge and consent of their parents. If they do, they grievously sin, -- not only against their parents, but also against God. They have transgressed the sixth commandment in the eyes of the Lord.<sup>13</sup>

It is not the purpose of this paper to discuss the validity of these principles. It is, however, not possible to draw these conclusions from the situation in our text. The circumstances under which people became betrothed in the Old Testament era are much different than those of today. The question of voluntary or involuntary consent or of secret engagements and marriages is not at all involved in this story.

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13. Hartenberger, op. cit., pp. 83 - 86.



The point of the whole story lies in the 56th verse where the messenger says, "Hinder me not, seeing the Lord hath prospered my way." It was a question of conforming or not conforming to the will of God which was manifest to all the parties concerned.

The story of Elijah and the poor widow has been suggested as an illustration of how Christian people ought to support those among us who are laboring for some noble cause such as the ministry, care of the sick, the relieving of suffering among the poor, championing the rights of the under privileged, teaching the youth of the community in the ways of good citizenship, and so forth. 1 Kings 17, 13 tells us that Elijah came to this woman and said, "Fear not, make me therefore a little cake first." Although the woman had only enough meal and oil for a very meager meal for herself and her son, she yielded to the persuasion of Elijah and served him a meal. Because of this noble gesture a preacher has called forth this plea:

Join with me, then, my friends, in the noble resolve suggested by this text. Let it be with us, that no sacrifice shall be counted too great for us to make in order to keep alive in our day those great souls of vision and courage, especially those found among the youth of our homes and communities. Let us give sympathy, cooperation and guidance to them like Elijah giving to Elisha, like Eli nurturing young Samuel into his God-given work. With them we will gladly share our last morsel of time, energy, or spiritual knowledge that they may have their day of worship, and work to crush the Ahabs and Jezebels out of our souls, to stand true to every good work, to make sacrifices to keep alive the prophets within us. 14

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14. Arthur Lee Odell, in Preachers and Preaching in Detroit.



Although the cause for which the preacher pleads is most worthy, the widow is not an example of such a worthy and noble attitude. Here is the example of absolute faith in the goodness and faithfulness of God. She trusted the word of the prophet and acted on the basis of good faith. She was not motivated by any desire to support the prophet because he was a messenger of God and because of his noble work which is the motive suggested by the preacher in the selection above.

Another preacher has used this story to better advantage in discussing the ways used by God to spur his people to positive action. The fact that the brook dried up caused the prophet to withdraw from his place of hiding and to go out into the world about him where he saw the suffering that other people were enduring. This is well stated in the following selection:

There is so much so-called faith demanding a full stream. There is a challenge to the man who has to stand on the edge of a dry brook. It is my purpose now to hunt out a few specific lessons here to witness and advance at once from the brook that fails to a meal barrel that has no waste. It was God's purpose, then, and He proposes no less now for every one of us, that a hidden servant was wrong. Faith in God is not a condition to be hidden in some secret canyon as a personal security policy. It is rather an endowment to carry into the midst of life to sustain need with. The great ministry of religion is not to endow indolence with divine security. If this were the case, every canyon would be occupied. Indulgent Elijahs would be stretched beside every available stream.

Religion has always suffered at this point. God has been compelled to dry up many a brook to save His people. Elijah became self-centered while the brook ran full. He sent no invitations to famishing folks to come and drink at his good brook. He would have forgotten other folks absolutely, had the brook ran on.



When he got in trouble, then he thought of others. "My brook is dry?" I wonder if he had been eager to share his brook with others, would it have failed? That is the exact point of my contrasting interest in the un-wasting meal and barrel.<sup>15</sup>

An Old Testament story that serves well as an illustration of saving faith we might choose the story of Naaman who came to Elisha in search of relief from the leprosy which no one else could heal. At first the solution to his problem seemed much too simple, even disagreeable, to accept; but finally he was persuaded to heed the prophet's advice and he was cured of his malady. The following are valid applications of this text.

As we behold this man, who had everything that money could buy, yet was overtaken by such horror, we ought to realize keenly that position, wealth, acclaim, cannot give us a secure life. . . . It is remarkable that this Syrian general was not defeated by the dread disease, just as great Christian heroes have often conquered sorrow. . . . When Naaman arrived at the Prophet's house, he was sorely disappointed. Elisha remained inside and merely sent a messenger to the mighty Syrian general. . . . He had not learned one of the first lessons of the Lord's truth, namely, that the Almighty is no respecter of persons. . . . Naaman was incensed because in the false Syrian religion he had been taught to believe it necessary for some intermediary or priest to introduce him to the Lord and intercede especially for him. . . . The warrior had not discovered, as many of you do not know, how simple and straightforward the Christian faith is. You yourself can personally approach God through Jesus. . . . When Naaman changed from doubt to devotion, when trust took the place of his hot passions - and this happens when you are born again in Jesus Christ - see how gloriously the Lord showed His power!"<sup>16</sup>

The story of Jacob and Esau are most familiar to people as examples of things that Christian people ought not do.

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15. Merton S. Rice, in Preachers and Preaching in Detroit.  
 16. Walter A. Maier, America, Turn to Christ, pp. 230-238.



There is an example in their lives that shows a very fine Christian virtue, that of contentment. When Jacob and Esau met after their separation because of strained relations between them, both brought gifts intended to placate the feelings of the other. Neither of them were willing to accept the gift because both felt that they had no need of it. They both declared, "I have enough." (Genesis 33, 9, 11) Spurgeon presents both characters as examples of the proper Christian attitude when one considers his earthly and spiritual blessings. They are enough for us all. For them we should be thankful. With them we should be content.<sup>17</sup>

Special services and certain regular services that appear on the preacher's calendar annually such as New Year, Christmas, Easter, church dedications, anniversaries, and installations demand sermons that conform somehow to the general theme of the occasion. It often becomes quite a problem to find a new or fresh approach to these themes which have been used so many times. In an effort to find new texts to fit the occasion they resort to choosing phrases and passages that in themselves seem to express an idea appropriate to the occasion. Regardless of the fact that sometimes these texts actually express a sentiment completely foreign to their purposes, they are chosen as the basis for their sermons. A preacher has chosen Genesis 41, 9 as a text for his New Year's Day address. It reads, "Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, I do remember my faults this day."

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17. D. O. Fuller, op. cit., p. 18.



If we look back to the old year, we shall find that we often have sinned, for we frequently have done that which God has forbidden and have neglected to do that which we should have done.<sup>18</sup>

It is indeed to the credit of the butler that he at last remembered his obligations to Joseph whom he had left lying in prison all these days. The lesson that we can learn from him is that we should not forget to keep our promises. It is not possible to conclude from this text that we should look over our past lives intending to confess our sins and to remind ourselves of the Lord's mercies. The butler hardly made a confession of any sins. He was not a Christian and his remark was not intended as any statement of humiliation and repentance. A preacher would do much better in choosing another text for encouraging his people to this end.

2 Chron. 20, 21 - 22, has been well used as a text for a Thanksgiving sermon. The Children of Israel were in the midst of a desperate war against the Ammonites, Moabites, and Seirites. The king Jehoshaphat prayed the Lord for victory and before he led his people into battle. He encouraged his entire army to praise God because of the mercies He had already shown them. With this as their hope, they entered the battle and won the victory over their foes.

I need hardly draw the parallel for you in this our second wartime Thanksgiving, when we find ourselves in the midst of a struggle which, despite recent successes, can tax our resources and in the months ahead demand more lives than during the two years of bloodshed behind us. In this crisis, let us, likewise, not place our reliance only on men, our hope only in armies, navies, and aircraft! . . . God, who has lost none of His divine power since the days of Jehoshaphat, can, if He will, end this struggle before many tens or hundreds of thousands of human lives have been lost in the de-

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18. Hartenberger, op. cit., p. 49.



cisive battles which seem to be approaching. But we can have no hope that the Almighty will thus miraculously help us unless America turn to Him in grateful recognition.<sup>19</sup>

The appropriateness of this sermon lies in the similarity of the situations found in the text and that of the world to which the sermon was preached. In both situations the reasons for thankfulness seemed to be very few in number, but the urgency for the proper attitude was very great.

It is the duty of every pastor to commend virtue, to encourage the faithful in their efforts to live the life of new-born creatures. The Lord Himself does not hesitate to commend the woman of Samaria for her faith. It is strange, however, to note the peculiar characters and passages of Scripture that men will choose to promote these ends.

In 2 Kings 6, 30, we have the statement that a certain king, upon hearing the sad story of a woman who was forced to eat her own child to prevent starvation, went out upon the wall "and the people looked, and, behold, he had sackcloth within upon his flesh." This sackcloth was to indicate the suffering that was going on within his soul because he was sorrowing over the needs of his people. This same king immediately ordered the head of Elisha cut off. Had not Elisha been able to detect his evil motives and prepare for his safety, he would have lost his life. Yet a preacher has chosen this character as an example of people who are bearing a cross in great patience while the rest of the world looks upon

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19. Walter A. Maier, op. cit., p. 259 - 264.



them as living in great happiness and contentment.

There is another company of whom I wish to speak. It is the company of those who are brave with a finer courage; the indomitable souls who are uncrowned, un-honored, and unsung; they tread the winepress alone. Their path lies within the shadow. They walk a solitary way. Theirs is the finer courage for it is all un-seen. It is finer and higher, harder and holier. As they pace the city streets, the world sees the royal robe and accounts them the favorites of heaven. It would be astounded to discover that there was sack-cloth within upon their flesh.<sup>20</sup>

The Ark of the covenant and its various appointments were very carefully made according to instructions received from God. In Exodus 25, 40, the Lord tells Moses, "And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount." A certain preacher has entitled a sermon, "Vision and Life," and based it upon this text. In this sermon he attempts to show that Moses had an intense consciousness of God and the supreme reality, which was for him the unseen world. For this Moses sought final authority and truth which he found in the mount. This heavenly vision, this authority and final statement of truth that Moses received from God, was his guide in leading men to Him. Men of today must look to the cross as a source of this vision. This vision of truth, this pattern which Moses received on the mount, is "not only the standard by which a man judges himself. It is the standard by which God judges us."<sup>21</sup> All of these conclusions were based upon the instructions that God had given Moses for the building of the appointments in the

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20. Augustine Jones, in Prize Sermons, by E.A. McAlpin, p.78.

21. J. R. Peacock, in Prize Sermons, pp. 281 - 289.



Ark of the Covenant. That was not the purpose of the text.

The story of Hannah in 1 Samuel 1 has often been used as an example of a noble Christian woman. The following is an illustration of how it has been used very appropriately as an encouragement to Christian mothers.

Every American mother should follow Hannah and rely on the Almighty. Not in feminism, modernism, Communism, which destroy the interdependence of husband and wife, weaken the ties binding a mother to home, husband, and children; not in worldliness and wanton rejection of God's Law, can the women of this country find abiding help and building power. With Hannah they must go back to God, and that means back to Jesus. . . Hannah also shows us how motherhood is to approach God. Year after year she went to the Lord's Tabernacle at Shiloh; and what that sanctuary was to her, the true churches of Christ are to us today. She lived a long distance from the Tabernacle; but spurning every suggestion of worshiping at a near-by Canaanite shrine, she regularly made the pilgrimage to God's house. What marvelous blessing would come to our country if all our women were led by the same loyalty! . . . "For this child I prayed, and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him." She implied that the baby Samuel was a trust imposed on her by the Lord and that nothing would make her untrue to this charge.<sup>22</sup>

Our last example is a sermon based on Judges 13:8 which records the story of the birth of Samson. Before the child is born, his father Manoah prays, "Teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born." A number of conclusions have been based on this story.

We should also notice that the announcement proclaiming the birth of Manoah's child was brought by the Angel of the Lord. God Himself here regards the gift of a child to devout parents as a blessing indeed, worthy of an angelic messenger. . . Manoah and his wife were deeply concerned about their promised son. If only today all American parents could focus interest, love, attention on their sons and daughters and recognize the value of

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<sup>22</sup>. Walter A. Maier, op. cit., pp. 39 - 44.



a child! . . . We should not lose sight of the fact that by divine instruction Mancoah's wife was told to prepare for her motherhood in a special way. She was told, "Drink not wine nor strong drink!" Again, it will not strike a popular note to repeat these words today, for ours is an age that fairly drips with liquor; yet the spiritual damage which intoxicants have done to women is tremendous, and the excess of alcoholism often leave their marks on the children.<sup>23</sup>

The statements made by this preacher are indeed worthy of acceptance by all who read them, but they are not all found in our text. The idea that by sending an angel God indicated His attitude toward the blessings of motherhood is not a logical conclusion. God does indeed consider the gift of a child as a blessing, but the reason for the angel in this particular instance was not that God considered the birth of any child of such great importance, but because this was a very special occasion. This child was one destined to be a great man in the Kingdom of God. The Lord had set him aside for a most important task and therefore He took special pains to see that he would be properly received by his parents. Likewise the admonition to mothers to refrain from the use of alcoholics does not follow from this text. The admonition to the wife of Mancoah was based on the fact that this child was to be a Nazarite. This he could not be if his mother indulged in the use of wine during the time when the child was in her womb. Therefore, to say that this text is an admonition to all women to follow in the same footsteps is not in accord with the text at all, though the statement in itself is very true.

The point that American parents ought to show love and

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23. Ibid., pp. 167 - 170.



interest in their children is well taken from this text. The whole attitude of Manoah and his wife is exemplary. The fact that they were concerned about the welfare of the child that was soon to be born to them seems to be the central thought of the story and it is this thought that ought to be emphasized.



## The Exposition of New Testament Narratives

The exposition of New Testament narratives presents the same general problems as that of the narratives taken from the Old Testament. The major problem is that of making them fit into the lives of Christian hearers in our world today. In our discussion we will include the miracles of Jesus, the accounts of His pastoral work, and a few stories of the disciples at work as missionaries. The parables of Jesus will be treated in a separate chapter.

The Bible uses terms such as darkness, depravity, filth, uncleanness, and even death to describe the terribleness of sin. Such terms register an unpleasant feeling in the minds of hearers because they connote weaknesses and frailties which they have experienced in their own lives or have seen in the lives of others. In keeping with the figure of sin as a disease, Jesus, the Savior from sin, has been called the Good Physician. We have a number of records that speak of Him as a Healer of physical ills. These narratives are simple statements of fact. There is no hidden or metaphorical meaning attached to them. Yet, it is a common practice for preachers to find in these stories metaphorical or symbolical figures presenting the Lord not only as a Healer of physical ills but also as a Physician of souls.

In Mark 1, 40 - 42, we have a record of the Cleansing of the Leper. This story has been expounded as follows by Spurgeon:



Alas! we have to deal with spiritual lepers eaten up with the foul disease of sin; but some of them do not believe that they ever can be healed, and the consequence is that despair makes them sin most greedily. . . We have a number of lepers who come in among us whose disease is white upon their brows, and visible to all beholders, and yet they are indifferent: they do not mourn their wickedness, nor wish to be cleansed from it. This leper's faith was strong enough to make him believe that he could be healed of his hideous disease. Splendid faith! Oh that you who are afflicted with moral and spiritual leprosy could believe in this fashion! Jesus Christ of Nazareth can heal even you. Over the horror of leprosy, faith triumphed. Oh that in your case it would overcome the terribleness of sin!<sup>1</sup>

The story of Bethesda in John 5, 3 - 9 has often been treated in a similar way. Jeff D. Ray quotes a preacher as making the following divisions for a sermon based on this text:

1. The blind represent those who have insufficiency of knowledge.
2. The halt represent those who make insincere profession.
3. The withered are those who have no sorrow for sin.<sup>2</sup>

Surely there is nothing in the text that would give any one any reason for drawing such conclusions from this text.

A similar treatment of the same text is the following:

The whole history of this miracle may suitably be taken as a picture of Christ's mercy to our souls. The world was all crippled and diseased, and he came among us unsought; first to one nation, Israel, but now to all; and He was "found of them that sought Him not." Our cleansings, our attempts at cure, for all those ages that went before the birth of our Deliverer, were but "waitings," like those in the "five porches."<sup>3</sup>

Although what these preachers say is in itself very true, it is a gross distortion of the meaning of the text when they make it the source of such statements. This story presents the Lord as one who is concerned about every single person in

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1. Spurgeon, op. cit., p. 19.
  2. Jeff D. Ray, op. cit., p. 86.
  3. William J. Irons, the Miracles of Christ, p. 127.



the world without any respect to station or condition in life. It also shows Him to be the true Son of God in possession of divine omnipotence. That is all that we can draw from this text as far as the life and work of Jesus is concerned.<sup>4</sup>

In an attempt to present their sermons in a unique way, preachers have chosen a single phrase out of a story and made it the central thought of their entire sermon which resulted in a very warped exposition of the text. This was done by Spurgeon when he preached a sermon entitled, "Carried by Four" which was based on the story of the Man Sick with the Palsy as we find it in Luke 5, 16 - 26. He has a number of interesting but strained observations to make on this theme.

This man must needs be borne of four, so the evangelist Mark tells us; there must be a bearer at each corner of the couch whereon he lay. The great mass of persons who are brought into the Kingdom of Christ are converted through the general prayers of the church by means of her ministry. Probably three out of four of the members of any church will owe their conversion to the church's regular teaching in some form or other; her school, her pulpit, her press have been the nets in which they were taken. . . It may be that one of our seat-holders, after listening to my voice these ten or fifteen years, is not impressed; it may be that another as left the Sabbath-school unconverted. Let brotherly quaternions look after these by God's help. Moved by one impulse, form a square about these persons, beset them behind and before, and let them not say, "No man careth for my soul." Meet together in prayer with the definite object before you, and

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4. Spurgeon errs in the same way when he makes the following application of the story: "He who stepped down first in the pool was cured, but all the rest came up from the pool just as they went in. Ah ! my hearers, I tremble for some of you - you chapel-goers and church - goers, who have for years been waiting, how few of you get saved! Thousands of you lie in your sins, waiting in wicked unbelief. (C. H. Spurgeon, Sermons, vol. IX, p. 231.



then seek that object by the most likely ways. . . . If we want to save souls, we must not be too squeamish and delicate about conventionalities, rules, and proprieties, for the Kingdom of heaven suffereth violence. . . . There are some in this house of prayer this morning who are spiritually paralyzed; they have eyes and they see the Gospel; they have ears and they have heard it, and heard it attentively too; but they are so paralyzed that they will tell you, and honestly tell you, that they cannot lay hold upon the promises of God.<sup>5</sup>

In Mark 10, 49 - 50, we have the story of the Blind Beggar who was very anxious to see Jesus. He was rebuked by the crowd of people around him, but he did not give up. The object of the story is indicated by Jesus Himself when He replied, "Go your way; your faith has made you whole." Spurgeon has made applications which fail to bring out the true meaning of the text.

This man is a picture of what we would fain have every seeker of Christ to become. In his lonely darkness, and deep poverty, he thought and became persuaded that Jesus was the Son of David. Though he had no sight, he made good use of his hearing. If we have not all gifts, let us use those we have. He cast away his garment, and every hindrance. Our righteousnesses, our comfortable sin, our habit, - anything, everything we must quit for Christ.<sup>6</sup>

As a Man among men, Jesus constantly observed the traditional customs of social intercourse found among the Jews of His day. He witnessed them in their every-day walks of life. He saw and personally experienced their trials and sufferings. Whenever we find Jesus among people who are active, He becomes the center of attraction. Because of His being there, every detail of the account assumes particular significance. They have been subjected to the most profound exegesis which

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5. Ibid., pp. 459 - 468.

6. D. O. Fuller, op. cit., pp. 196 - 197.



has resulted in interpretations and expositions entirely foreign to the point of the text itself.

A good example of this is the lengthy excerpt from a sermon based on the account of the Wedding Feast at Cana, written in John 2, 1 - 11.

We heed to the words of Mary to the servants saying: "Whatsoever He saith unto you, Do it!" as an earnest exhortation to those who enter the estate of matrimony and those who live in wedlock. I. So enter the estate of matrimony that you can cheerfully invite Jesus to your wedding. II. So live in wedlock that Jesus can sit at your fireside.

Highly did Jesus Christ, the Son of God honor this estate by making the beginning of His miracles at a wedding. When He was about to enter the public exercise of His office and wanted to begin to manifest forth His glory, He went not to the temple, not to the kingly palace, He went to the wedding of a poor and humble couple and there He performed His first miracle. By this action He sanctioned the estate of matrimony and honored it above all other estates.

The couple in our text had been engaged and they faithfully kept their engagement. In our times and country engagements are treated altogether too lightly. Instead of regarding it as permanently binding, many look upon the engagement only as a time of trial and think it might be broken off at any time, or at the option of either party.

The couple in our text invited Jesus to their marriage. There, my young friends, is another thing which Jesus wants you to do. He wants you to invite Him to your wedding.

The contracting parties in our text were not a run-away couple, or Jesus would not have honored their wedding with His presence. Their relatives and friends were there, and they came together honestly and honorably and in no disreputable manner.

At first a moderate quantity of good wine was given and then only weak or liberally watered wine, and this was done to prevent drunkenness. So this very text is a strong testimony for the decency and sobriety with which Jewish weddings were celebrated. A marriage is a proper time for joy, but excess is not joy and it should have



no place at Christian weddings. <sup>7</sup>

Every single conclusion drawn in the sermon above is in itself, good, Christian advice. But not one of them can find substantiation in the text chosen. The fact that Jesus was present at this wedding and that He performed His first miracle there have no mutual relation at all. Jesus might well have chosen any other scene for His first miracle if He were at all concerned about the place. Unless He gives us reason for His choice, we can only say that Jesus simply found it a convenient, natural setting for His first miracle. To think that it was His purpose to especially honor the estate of matrimony by this performance is not a valid conclusion.

To admonish other people to invite Jesus to their wedding on the basis of the action of the couple in the story is also pressing the details of the story farther than we have a right to. We cannot say whether Jesus was specially invited as the Lord or whether His presence was due to the fact that He was a member of the family and included in the general invitation as a matter of form.

It is obvious that the parties concerned were properly engaged and were no "run-away couple." But it is not proper to conclude that Jesus would not have been present at the wedding had the situation been otherwise. We might conclude that He would have made His presence the more conspicuous if all were not as it should have been. He would no doubt have taken the opportunity to speak about the subject and to admonish the

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7. F. Kuegele, Country Sermons, vol. III, Gospel Selections, pp. 107 - 112.



parties concerned. But this is also pressing the details of the text too far. It demonstrates what can be done if we allow ourselves free reign in making application of the incidental remarks in a narrative.

The last conclusion made by the preacher on temperance is a very gross example of over-interpretation. There is no indication that the weaker wine was served last for the purpose of preventing drunkenness. Although it may have been true, the text doesn't say so.

The story of Mary and Martha entertaining the Lord Jesus has also been subject to such over-interpretation. It has been suggested that just as Mary and Martha opened their home to the Lord so we are also to accept Him as a welcome guest at our dinner table. We must never close a day without praying with Him intimately and confidently as though He were present in person beside us and our family.<sup>8</sup>

A sermon has even been written on the basis of three words chosen from Luke 7, 38, "at His feet." This is a violation of exegetical principles as we can see from the use made of these words.

It is a becoming posture as He is divine, we are sinful, and He is our Lord. It is a helpful posture for our humility will help penitence, our lowly submission will bring assurance, and our full obeisance will prepare for service. In such a position devils are driven out and no longer rule us. It is a safe posture because Jesus will not refuse us that position. He will not spurn the humbly submissive, will in self-despair cast themselves before Him. Jesus will not suffer any to harm those who seek refuge at His feet. He will not deny us the eternal privilege of abiding there.<sup>9</sup>

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8. Walter A. Maier, op. cit., p. 38.

9. O. D. Fuller, op. cit., p. 205.



When Jesus sent His disciples to look for a room in which to eat the Passover, He told them to ask, "Where is the guestchamber where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples?" This question has been suggested as the basis for the admonition to invite the Lord into our households that we might have the rich blessings of His presence in our families.<sup>10</sup>

After Jesus had driven the unclean spirit out of the demoniac in the country of the Gerasenes, the people asked Him to leave the country. He immediately returned to Galilee where "the people gladly received Him: for they were all waiting for Him." (Luke 8:40) This statement has been chosen by a preacher as a text for the sermon, "A Welcome for Jesus." This is another instance where a single historical remark has been pressed into service as a source for spiritual admonition.

They were all waiting for Him. This waiting may be seen in several different forms. A praying company, an earnest church, looking for revival and prepared to cooperate in labor for it. A seeking sinner, sighing for mercy, searching the Scriptures, hearing the Word, inquiring of Christians, constantly praying and thus "waiting for Him." A departing saint, longing for Him, saying like Jacob, "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord." "The people gladly received Him." They feared lest He might have gone forever from them. They trusted that now their sick would be cured, and their dead would be raised. Those who pray that Jesus may come are glad when He comes. Jairus now looked to have his child healed. Their love made Him welcome. When our heart is with Him, we rejoice in His appearing. Jesus never disappoints those who wait for Him. Jesus never refuses those who welcome Him.<sup>11</sup>

The same preacher has chosen a verse from the story of

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10. Walter A. Maier, op. cit., p. 137.

11. D. O. Fuller, op. cit., p. 202.



Mary and Martha and made a better application of it. The words, "And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His word," were chosen as a text for the theme "Love at Home."

Like Mary we should feel ourselves quite at home with Jesus our Lord. We should be free from worldly care -- leaving all with Jesus. All our future, for time and for eternity, safe in His dear hands. Let us, without fear, enjoy leisure to love, to learn, to commune, to copy.<sup>12</sup>

The incidental actions of Jesus have been the subject of fantastic interpretations. While Jesus was making His trip to Samaria, He stopped at Jacob's well. In John 4, 6 we read, "Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour." The theme chosen for this text was, "Jesus Sitting on the Well." The preacher makes the following comments:

How worn was His humanity! He was more weary than the disciples. His self-denials were even then remarkable. He would not exempt Himself from fatigue. He would not work a miracle for His own refreshment. Let your conscience draw a spiritual picture of your wearied Savior. He is wearied with our sins, our formal worship, our erring unbelief, our resistance of His Spirit, and our cavillings and rebellions. He waits for comers to the well; He seizes on all occasions to bless, such as affliction, the hearing of the Word, the recurrence of a birthday, or even the simplest event of life. . . . Be yourself weary of your sinful way. Wait and watch till your Savior comes. Ask Him to give you to drink, for this is His best refreshment. Drink yourselves of the living water, and then run to tell others.<sup>13</sup>

The conversation that Jesus held with Zaccheus has been the subject of many sermons. A verse from this conversation,

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12. Ibid., p. 209.

13. Ibid., p. 222.



written in Luke 19, 9 has been used to good advantage by a preacher who made the following remarks about it:

The interview of Christ with Zaccheus is striking whether you look at it merely in its outward aspect, or try to get at its inward meaning. . . The manner in which this conversion was brought about. It was by this that it came clearly and personally home to Zaccheus that Christ would come to him in kindness and goodwill. Of course, in this as in every conversion, grace was concerned. . . The past of his own life and character made him all the more aware of how utterly strange and new this love and truth was that was coming in disguise to such a selfish, false, lying, unscrupulous man as he had been. . . The attitude of the parties on this occasion. Both Jews and disciples murmured at this horrid mistake. Do not be very anxious about misconstruction, even on the part of good people, if only we are sure that we are following Christ in His purity and kindness.<sup>14</sup>

Often the casual remarks of Jesus, made as He carried on a conversation with His disciples or as He instructed His followers, are taken as slogans and mottos for universal principles regardless of the limiting circumstances that might surround them.

In John 21, 15 we have the account of the re-instatement of Peter into the apostleship. In the course of the proceedings Jesus admonishes him to "Feed My lambs." On the basis of this remark a preacher has said:

"Why does the Lutheran church establish and maintain Christian Schools?" 1. Because she has the command of Jesus to feed His lambs. and 2. Because under the prevailing conditions she can feed them best by nurturing them in Christian schools. We must not overlook the fact that Jesus calls our little baptized children His lambs. Yes, they belong to Him. They are His by creation, by redemption, and by sanctification.<sup>15</sup>

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14. R. Rainy, Three Hundred Outlines of Sermons on the New Testament, p. 61.

15. Hartenberger, op. cit., pp. 327 - 330.



A sermon on Christian education can very well be based on the text chosen. The general admonition to feed the flock of God certainly includes the children and the best way to accomplish this is through the Christian school. It is not quite accurate, however, to claim that the word 'lamb' is specifically intended to mean the children and that this statement of Jesus is particularly intended to mean the feeding or instruction of them.

In John 14 we have a record of the farewell discourses of Jesus in which He reminds His disciples of the impending tragic events which they were soon to witness. After reminding them that God would send the Holy Spirit to guide and counsel them in their work, He tells them, "Arise, let us go hence." These words have been used as the basis of a sermon intended to admonish Christians to be watchful and to be prepared for any eventuality.

By this stirring word He expressed His desire to obey the Father. He indicated His readiness to meet the arch-enemy. He was prepared for the test. . . Ever onward, ever forward, we must go. Out of the world when first called by grace. Out of forbidden associations, if, as believers, we find ourselves like Lot in Sodom. Out of present attainments when growing in grace. Out of all rejoicing in self. There we must never stop for a single instant. Self-satisfaction should startle us. To suffer when the Lord lays affliction on us. To die when the voice from above calls us home. 16

The simple act of raising His head to heaven as Jesus said, "Ephaphtha, that is, be opened," has been used to indicate to men the proper attitude and demeanor when they pray.



Although this might be true, it certainly does not take the most important and obvious lesson out of the text. Too much emphasis has been placed on this remark when the preacher tells us that:

We have here set before us the foundation and condition of all true work for God in the Lord's heavenward look. The heavenward look is the renewal of our own vision of the calm verities in which we trust - the recourse for ourselves to the realities which we desire that others should see. The heavenward look draws new strength from the source of all our might. If our prayer, our longing, trustful look, is turned to the heavens, we shall not speak in vain on earth when we say, "Be opened." 17

The central thought of the Healing of Blind Bartimaeus has also been misplaced in the treatment of Mark 10, 51 as a text for the sermon entitled, "A Gracious Question." This takes into account only a very small portion of the narrative and the resulting exegesis sheds a false light on the story as a whole. In this question the preacher notes the delicacy of the Savior in His approach to the blind beggar and the wisdom He demonstrates because the question sets the beggar's mind to thinking. It is also to inspire Christians to tenderness, wisdom, and generosity in their associations with other people. 18

The same preacher makes much better use of the question, "Will ye also go away?" which Jesus addressed to the Twelve after quite a number had left Him when He told them that they must accept Him as a spiritual Savior. This is recorded in John 6.

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17. Alexander Maclaren, Three Hundred Outlines, p. 37.

18. Charles H. Spurgeon, Three Hundred Outlines, p. 39.



Why do people go away? Because the Gospel is offensive to human nature and revolting to the pride of the creature. Some leave Christ being terrified by persecution. Some forsake true religion out of sheer levity. Multitudes are tempted to go aside by evil companions. Many leave Christ for the sake of sensual enjoyments, on account of change of circumstances, or out of sheer laziness. . . Why should we go away, as they have gone? If we are left to ourselves, I cannot give you any reason. If we are to be preserved from falling we must be schooled in humility and kept very low before the Lord.<sup>19</sup>

When Jesus came to the tomb of Lazarus He asked some one else to take the stone away. This has become the text for a sermon on spiritual difficulties. It is a distortion of the text. Not one of the ideas presented can be validly concluded from the text without taking it out of its immediate context and purpose.

God never performs an unnecessary act. Jesus, though omnipotent, never spoke an unnecessary word nor performed an unnecessary deed. . . He says to you -- "Take away the stone." Let us consider some of the stones it is possible for us to remove. I. The stone of indifference. Your friend has no care for religious subjects. Make him feel that nothing is so foolish, so ruinous as to ignore God and the spiritual world. . . II. There is the stone of scepticism. Men doubt and hesitate, and this is better than indifference. Doubt means some attention; doubt means that the soul has not settled on some wrong. Let your faith help your brother's scepticism. . . III. Another stone is unbelief in Christ because of unbelief in Christians. Search your own soul. You may be truly Christ's and yet there may be something in your disposition or manners, that perpetually perplexes onlookers. IV. The heaviest stone is the indulgence of some vice, and no vice so stands in the way<sup>20</sup> of progress of the Gospel as the vice of intemperance.

The desire to use metaphors in presenting the fortunes of the Christian and the Christian Church has led many pastors to take stories from the life of Jesus and His disciples and

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19. Ibid., p. 78.

20. C. F. Deems, Three Hundred Outlines, p. 87.



to affix to them allegorical and figurative meanings.

On Easter morning the three Marys' went to the sepulcher of the Savior. As they were making their way to the tomb, they asked, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher?" And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away." This is found in Mark 16, 3 - 4.

C. F. Deems has found spiritual significance in these words:

Mark the importance of not dwelling on difficulties in Christian work, and in the discharges of the duties which life brings. In every great thing there are difficulties ~~==~~ some known to us, others not. But there are also proceedings upon the part of God that we do not know, and those proceedings are always helpful to those who are going about doing their dut . It is not my work to roll away the stone, but it is my duty to go to the grave. . . In all our work, let us fall back on God's co-operation. He always helps good work. He has profound and unceasing interest in all human beings, in the simplest things if they are done for Him. <sup>21</sup>

A favorite figure depicting the fortunes of the Church is that of a ship on the stormy seas. Like the story of Noah and the Ark, the miracle Jesus performed in stilling the tempest on the sea has enticed preachers to use it in describing the fortunes of the Church in the world of enemies surrounding it. Actually there is no allusion whatsoever to the Church as such in the story. It is a demonstration of Jesus' humanity and His omnipotence as contrasted with the weakness of faith in the hearts of human beings. The latter point has been brought out by the following sermon.

The Great Benefits Which Affliction Brings the Christian.  
I. Affliction uncovers the Christian's weaknesses and the dangers besetting him. II. It draws him closer to

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21. C. F. Deems, Three Hundred Outlines, p. 41.



the right Helper. . . Laying too much store by what they were doing in following the Lord, the disciples stepped into that ship; but now this storm arose, and not a common storm, but such a whirlwind against which all their experience in boating could help them nothing. Despairing of escape by their own skill, they appealed to the Lord, and when He calmed the wind, what could be more plain than this that they were not doing Him a favor, but He was doing them a favor. . . Their confidence stood more in the weather than in the Lord. . . When everything goes smoothly it is easy for the Christian to be confident. And yet good days are the most dangerous time for the Christian. . . On that ship He stood among the disciples as a man in the form of a servant, and if the elements obeyed Him then in His state of humiliation, how much rather are all creatures at His command now, since He is exalted to the right hand of the Father and all things are put under His feet?<sup>22</sup>

The point of Jesus' humanity and divinity is brought out well by the excerpt from a sermon by Taylor:

In the first place, let us take note that we have here an incidental confirmation of the great truth that the Lord Jesus Christ is both really human and truly divine. He was asleep -- there is His humanity; for of God it is said, "Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." He commanded the winds into silence, and the waves into peace -- there is Deity; for to God alone can it be said, "Thou rulest the raging of the sea; when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them."<sup>23</sup>

The story of Jesus Walking on the Sea as recorded in Matthew 14 has been explained allegorically as having reference to the Church of Christ. Though this preacher didn't follow through completely with this type of interpretation, it is evident that he was thinking in these terms when he said:

This gracious Miracle is for the Church as a Body and for her Apostolic Ministry. That "walking of (sic) the waters" by our Redeeming Lord is His guarantee to His Church in every age, that when the waves of trouble run high and rage mightily, "the Lord that reigneth is mightier!" His Church may be affrighted and distressed;

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22. Kuegele, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

23. William M. Taylor, The Miracles of Our Savior, p. 216.



but He beholds it all. Peter may even seem to sink but the hands of Christ shall lift him up. That Sacred Vessel which bears the Apostolic company can never perish. It must reach its destiny, and Christ's coming shall be the sign of glory gained forever.<sup>24</sup>

Spurgeon has used this text to better advantage and brought out the central thought more clearly in his sermon entitled, "The Why and Wherefore of Doubt?" He makes some worthwhile comments on this theme.

Let us mention some supposable valid reasons for doubt. Can you quote past experience of broken promises? Is the present evil beyond the power of Omnipotence? Are the promises abolished? Are the purposes of grace annulled? Has God Himself changed? Is His mercy clean gone forever? None of these supposable reasons have any existence. Let us hear your actual reasons; if you dare state them. My sense of guilt is peculiarly deep and clear. My failures justify despair when viewed by the side of other men's attainments, and my own obligations. My trials are so peculiar, so fierce, so long, so varied. My heart fails me. I can bear up no longer. Shall we hint at the true reasons of your doubting? You were self-confident, and that confidence has failed you. Now that it is dark, you are in consequence troubled. You took your eye off from your Lord.<sup>25</sup>

The activities of the Apostles as missionaries are used by many preachers as texts for mission festivals or any occasion emphasizing a mission theme. These stories are usually noble examples of the proper mission spirit. In the attempt to add color to a very old theme or simply in search of bulk for sermon material, the incidental remarks of such narratives are pressed into service as proof for statements that are true in themselves but not necessarily true on the basis of the text they have chosen.

Probably the most commonly used story of this type is

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24. Wm. J. Irons, The Miracles of Christ, p. 159.

25. D. G. Fuller, op. cit., pp. 186 - 187.



that of Philip and the Eunuch recorded in Acts 8, 26 - 39.

Hartenberger draws two conclusions from this text as he says:

The man spoken of in our text was an Ethiopian, a Negro. Yes, it is the will of the Lord that all nations should be Christianized by His disciples. The Jew, the Turk, the Gentile, the infidel; the Caucasian, the Negro, the Mongolian, the Malay, the Indian; the pauper, the beggar, the rich the learned, the refined, in short, every man, woman, and child in this world should be made a true disciple of Jesus Christ. That is the will of the Lord.

To this very day, beloved fellow-Christians, there are no other means than God's Word and the Holy Sacraments through which a sinner may be converted -- Christianized. Christian mission work can be carried on successfully only through the Means of Grace. If we therefore would accomplish anything for the Lord and His blessed Kingdom, that is, if we would make sinful and lost men disciples of Jesus Christ and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, we must preach unto them the Gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>26</sup>

Both conclusions of this preacher are in themselves very true. The first one however, that the Ethiopian was a Negro and that therefore the Gospel was intended for all nations is not a valid conclusion from this text. In the first place it has not been established that the Ethiopian was a Negro. In the second place, only the Ethiopian is mentioned and no other country or race. Therefore the only rightful conclusion that we can make on the basis of this text is that the Gospel was intended for people other than the Jews among whom Jesus lived. To prove the universality of the Gospel we must go to other passages of Scripture of which there is an abundance.

The story of Peter's Denial has often been treated in sermons. W. M. Taylor has made some very fine applications on



the basis of the question addressed to Peter, "Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?"

This was a direct question. There was no getting past it. Outspoken and defiant even in his sin, Peter faced up to the inquiry, and said in reply, "I am not." Every critical occurrence in our history comes to a point in this question. There are four possible replies. I. There are those who say "Yes" when they ought to say "No." This is hypocrisy. . . II. There are those who say "No," and say it truly. . . This is ungodliness. III. There are some who say "No," when they should say "Yes." Some give that answer to the world. Like Peter, they yield to the fear of man. They act under the blind impulse of panic. Remember that your fears are for the most part imaginary. Peter in this case was in no danger. Sometimes the answer is given to the Church. A real disciple says, "I am not qualified to be a Church member." But modesty may be pressed to such an excess as to become disobedience. IV. There are those who, being disciples, answer "Yes" on all days, in all circumstances, and in all places, -- and that is Christian steadfastness.<sup>27</sup>

This same preacher did not do so well, however, when he chose a single phrase from the account of Paul's trip to Rome and made it the basis for his whole sermon. He took the statement, "And so we went toward Rome," Acts 28, 14, and made the following application:

These words are connected with a wonderful chapter of providences in the history of Paul. We have the accomplishment of a long-cherished purpose by the Apostle. . . In the economy of work he deemed it best to give himself to those fields that would most speedily reward his labour. If our consuming longing is for usefulness and not for our own honour, God in the end will give us our heart's desire. Paul's purpose was not attained precisely in the way in which at one time he had expected it would be realized. . . So we set our hearts on the attainment of some post of usefulness, and we get it ultimately, but it comes accompanied with something else of which we had no thought - something which effectually keeps us from pride. Paul's entrance accomplished all he desired.

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27. W. M. Taylor, Three Hundred Outlines, pp. 98 - 99.



Let no one undervalue his position, but use it, bonds and all, for Christ. Let us struggle on with faith and prayer, for we shall either reach Rome or something better.<sup>28</sup>

This man's error was not that he misinterpreted his text but that he used it only as a title or topic. If we accept the idea of a text as the source and basis of a sermon, we would have to say that this man had no text at all. If he wishes his people to take these words as a text in the sense suggested, then he has subjected it to great abuse for actually very few of his ideas could have been drawn from the text as he quoted it.

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28. Ibid., p. 122.



### The Exposition of Parable Texts

The exposition of parable texts presents problems of a special nature. Generally we might say that the same rules apply to them as to the narrative texts. That which complicates the exposition of the parables is the fact that they are intended to demonstrate a single spiritual truth which the Lord had in mind while He was telling the story. Sometimes this spiritual truth is told us before the story begins; sometimes the Lord gives an explanation of His parable after He has presented it; and often we must make a careful study of the context before we can arrive at the purpose of the parable.

That point at which the spiritual truth and the facts of the narrative coincide is called the tertium comparationis. It is imperative that we be perfectly clear on this point if we want to expound the text in the way the Savior Himself wanted it to be understood. Outside of this point of comparison all details have no spiritual significance. They are there only to complete the picture of the parable.

The chief error in interpreting parable texts lies in the tendency of preachers to find hidden spiritual meanings in the individual words and ideas of parables. This is done because they do not understand the principles of interpreting parables; they are desperate for sermon material, which is the result of lack of study; or simply because they take delight in fanciful exegesis.

In this chapter a number of parables will be presented



with their proper meaning and also a selection of sermon extracts illustrating both proper and improper exposition of parable texts.

In Luke 7: 41 - 43 Jesus tells the parable of Two Debtors who were unable to pay their obligations to their creditor. Though the debts of one were greater than those of the other, the creditor was kind enough to cancel both obligations. The Lord then asks which of them loved their master the most and the reply was, "The one, I suppose, to whom he forgave the most." The Lord approved the answer. The point of this parable becomes clear from the context. The Pharisee who was Jesus' host at the time, thought that Jesus wasn't aware of the character of the woman who was washing His feet, else He would surely have sent her away. It is the Lord's purpose to teach the Pharisee what it is that makes men thankful and grateful to God. Although the Pharisee had graciously entertained the Lord, his demonstrations of kindness did not compare with the act of the woman who was honoring the Lord by washing and anointing His feet. This outpouring of love was the result of sins forgiven. If the Pharisee had been equally conscious of his sins and had firmly believed that the Lord had forgiven them, he would have been ready to give the Lord just as strong a demonstration of love as this poor woman.

This particular idea is well brought out by the following excerpt from one of Spurgeon's sermons:



It was the consciousness of great indebtedness which created the great love in the penitent woman. Not her sin, but the consciousness of it was the basis of her loving character. . . In order to cultivate it we must seek to get a clearer view of the law's requirements, a deeper consciousness of the love of God to us, a keener valuation of the cost of redemption, and a surer persuasion of the perfection of our pardon will also help to show the baseness of our sin. This will lead to a highly loving conduct towards the Lord. We shall desire to be near Him, to show deep humility, and to render earnest service; doing all that lies in our power for Jesus, even as this woman did.<sup>1</sup>

A commentator has brought out this truth by contrasting the conduct of the Pharisee with that of the woman.

He applies this parable to the different temper and conduct of the Pharisee and the sinner towards Christ. Though the Pharisee would not allow Christ to be a prophet, Christ seems ready to allow him to be in a justified state, and that he was one forgiven, though to him less was forgiven. He did indeed show some love to Christ, in inviting him to his house, but nothing to what this poor woman showed. "Observe," saith Christ to him, "she is one that has much forgiven her, and therefore, according to thine own judgment, it might be expected that she should love much more than thou dost, and so it appears. Seest thou this woman? Thou lookest upon her with contempt, but consider how much kinder a friend she is to me than thou art; should I then accept thy kindness, and refuse hers?"<sup>2</sup>

One of the most popular parables is that of the Good Samaritan. Here again the context gives us the clue for its interpretation. It is told as an answer to the question, "And who is my neighbor?" The record in Luke 10 tells us that this question was an attempt on the part of the lawyer questioning Jesus to justify himself. The parable reminds us that any one who is in any way in need of our aid, is our neighbor. This is not conditioned in any way by race, creed

1. D. O. Fuller, op. cit., p. 206.

2. Matthew Henry, Commentary on the Whole Bible, vol. 5, p. 655.



politics, nationality, or family considerations.

This being one of the popular parables has also been subjected to some of the most violent misinterpretations. Preachers have sought to find in its details many hidden spiritual meanings. Honorius of Autun is quoted by Taylor:

Surely man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho when our first parent from the joys of Paradise entered death's eclipse. For Jericho, which means moon, designates the eclipse of our mortality. Whereby man fell among thieves, since a swarm of demons at once surrounded the exile. Wherefore also they despoiled him, since they stripped him of the riches of Paradise and the garment of immortality. They gave him wounds, for sins flowed in upon him. They left him half-dead, because dead in soul. The priest passed down the same way, as the Order of Patriarchs proceeded along the path of mortality. The priest left him wounded, having no power to aid the human race while himself sore wounded with sins. The Levite went that way, inasmuch as the Order of the Prophets also had to tread the path of death. He too passed by the wounded man, because he could bear no human aid to the lost while himself groaning under the wounds of sin. The wretch half-dead was healed by the Samaritan, for the man set apart through Christ is made whole. . . . He poured in wine and oil when He taught repentance and pardon. He poured in wine when He said, 'Repent ye'; He added oil when He said, 'for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' He set him upon His beast when He bore our sins in His body on the Cross. He led him to the inn when He joined him to the supernal Church. . . . He gave the pence to the inn-keeper when the Doctors are raised on high by Scriptural knowledge and temporal power. 3 If they should require more, He repays them on His return. 3

Matthew Henry has interpreted the parable in a similar way by applying it to the love of God toward sinful man.

He puts it in the following words,

Now this parable is applicable to another purpose than for which it was intended; and does excellently set forth

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3. Honorius of Autun, Speculum Ecclesiae, as quoted by Henry O. Taylor, in The Mediaeval Mind, p. 81.



the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards sinful, miserable man. We were like this poor distressed traveler. Satan, our enemy, had robbed us, stripped us, wounded us; such is the mischief that sin hath done us. We were by nature more than half dead, twice dead, in trespasses and sins; utterly unable to help ourselves, for we were without strength. The law of Moses, like the priest and Levite, the ministers of the law look upon us, but has no compassion on us, gives us no relief, passes by on the other side, as having neither pity nor power to help us; but then comes the blessed Jesus, that good Samaritan (and they said of him, by way of reproach, he is a Samaritan.), He has compassion on us, He binds up our bleeding wounds, pours in, not oil and wine, but that which is infinitely more precious, his own blood. He takes care of us, and bids us put all the expenses of our cure upon his account; and all this though He was none of us, till He was pleased by his voluntary condescension to make Himself so, but infinitely above us. This magnifies the riches of His love, and obliges us all to say, "How much are we indebted, and what shall we render?" 4

Both of the examples quoted above are misinterpretations of the text. Jesus did not at all propose to speak of the spiritual conditions of man in the sense that these preachers suggest. The Lord wanted to teach a lesson in neighborliness and that was all. This interpretation has been brought out in the following excerpt which also shows a valid use of the details in the text.

Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan, which tells rather what one must do in order to be neighborly. It is more important that we should be good neighbors than that we should always know who are to be the recipients of our neighborliness. . . The priest is the most disappointing person mentioned in the parable. We should expect better. Nothing quite so discouraging to a sincere Christian as a minister unfaithful to his trust. . . To us the behavior of these two peoples (Jews and Samaritans) is disappointing but I wonder whether we are in a position to criticize them. Our prejudices run deep and are as revolting as theirs.

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4. Matthew Henry, op. cit., vol. V, p. 688.



e.g., the race question. . . The person who is truly neighborly never does anything that is harmful to another, but in every way possible tries to do his neighbor good.<sup>5</sup>

In Luke 15 we find a trilogy of parables told by the Lord to point out to the murmuring Pharisees and scribes what the Lord's attitude toward sinners was and what theirs should be. These are the parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Prodigal Son. Spurgeon discusses the parable of the lost sheep properly when he says:

The love of Jesus is not mere sentiment; it is active and energetic. It is prevenient love, going after sheep that have no notion of returning to the fold from which they have wandered. It is engrossing, making Him leave all else. . . Let us learn from this a lesson of perseverance till souls are saved; of patience with souls who are newly found; of encouragement in expectation of the gathering into glory of those for whom we labor on behalf of Jesus.<sup>6</sup>

This parable has been equally well treated by Luther when he says:

The important question here is: How are sinners to be approached and treated? As two different parties, though both pretend to know the Word of God, here meet, so their answer to the above question is different. . . The Scribes and Pharisees draw the inference, that it does not become any man to deal with sinners otherwise than God does. And because God is angry with sinners and does not accept them, it becomes pious people not to accept them either, but to let them go their way. . . Our Lord Jesus Christ expresses another judgment, refutes the answer of the Pharisees altogether, and arrives at the opposite conclusion; namely, that God is no enemy of the sinner, and that He does not desire his death, for which reason He, the Lord Jesus, could not be the enemy of sinners either. He has come into the world to seek and to save the sheep that had been lost. This example should be followed by all men, especially by the ministers of the Gospel; as what is lost in the house is diligently

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5. Dallas C. Baer, Windows that Let the Light in, p. 50.

6. D. O. Fuller, op. cit., p. 210.



sought, so should they be<sup>7</sup> ever active in seeking those who are lost spiritually.

Although he has found the truth Jesus wanted to teach in these parables, Luther has gone a little too far in interpreting the details of the parable of the Lost Coin in the following paragraph:

The other parable, however, about the woman, refers to the Christian Church, which has the ministerial office, that poor sinners may be led to repentance and may be delivered from eternal death and condemnation and be saved. Like the Shepherd, she rejoices when she finds the piece of silver. She lights a candle, the Word of God, and sweeps the house, that is, teaches how we may become pious and comfort ourselves before God and His judgment by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. By this kind of preaching the Church finds the lost piece of silver. <sup>8</sup>

Matthew Henry has also taken the details of this parable and found in them meanings that were not intended for them.

The soul is silver, of intrinsic worth and value; not base metal, as iron or lead, but silver, the mines of which are royal mines. The Hebrew word for silver is taken from the desirableness of it. It is silver coin, for God's image and superscription, and therefore must be rendered to him. Yet it is comparatively but of small value; it was but seven pence half-penny; intimating that if sinful men be left to perish God would be no loser. The silver was lost in the dirt, a soul plunged into the world, and overwhelmed with the love of it and care about it, is like a piece of money in the dirt; any one would say, It is a thousand pities that it should lie there. Here is a great deal of care and pains taken in quest of it. The woman lights a candle, to look behind the door, under the table, and in every corner of the house, sweeps the house and seeks diligently till she finds it. This represents the various means and methods God makes use of to bring lost souls home to himself: he has lighted the candles of the gospel, not to show himself the way to us, but to show us the way to him, to discover

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7. Martin Luther, Sermons on the Gospels, vol. 2, p. 276.  
8. Ibid., p. 287.



us to ourselves; he has swept the house by the convictions of the word; he seeks diligently, his heart is upon it, to bring lost souls to himself.<sup>9</sup>

The last parable in this group of three is the most popular. It is an interesting narrative in itself, replete with graphic details. Here again ministers have been tempted to find spiritual meanings where there are none or have over-emphasized certain parts of the parable and thus actually missed the purpose for which it was told. Matthew Henry has found spiritual meaning in the robe which the father placed upon his returning son.

There is a double emphasis; "that robe, that principal robe, you know which I mean;" the first robe (so it may be read); the robe he wore before he ran his ramble. When backsliders repent and do their first works, they shall be received and dressed in their first robes. "Bring hither that robe, and put it on him; he will be ashamed to wear it, and think that it ill becomes him who comes home in such a dirty pickle, but put it on him, and do not merely offer it to him: and put a ring on his hand, a signet-ring, with the arms of the family, in token of his being owned as a branch of the family." Rich people wore rings, and his father hereby signified that though he had spent one portion, yet, upon his repentance, he intended him another. He came home bare-foot, his feet perhaps sore with travel, and therefore, "Put shoes on his feet, to make him easy." Thus does the grace of God provide for true penitents. First, the righteousness of Christ is the robe, the principal robe, with which they are clothed; they put on the Lord Jesus Christ, are clothed with that Sun. The robe of righteousness is the garment of salvation. A new nature is this best robe; true penitents are clothed with this, being sanctified throughout. Secondly, the earnest of the spirit, by whom we are sealed to the day of redemption, is the ring on the hand. After you believed you were sealed. They that are sanctified are adorned and dignified. are put in power, as Joseph was by Pharaoh's giving him a ring: "Put a ring on his hand, to be before him a constant memorial of his father's kindness, that he may never forget it." Thirdly, the preparation of the Gospel of peace is as shoes for our feet so that, com-

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9. Matthew Henry, op. cit., p. 740.



pared with this here, signified (saith Grotius) that God, when he receives true penitents into his favour, makes use of them for the convincing and converting of others by their instructions, at least by their examples.<sup>10</sup>

Spurgeon has come nearer to the point of the parable, but has not made the proper application. He says:

Jesus is afar off in the sinner's apprehension as to character. What a difference between the prodigal and the great Father as to knowledge, the prodigal knew little of his father's great heart. As to possession, the prodigal thought he had lost all claim to his father, and therefore said, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son." . . . The secret of hope for sinners. "His father saw him." The returning sinner was seen from afar by Omniscience. He was recognized as a Son is known by his father. He was understood, beloved, and accepted by his father.<sup>11</sup>

The real significance of the parable lies in the story of the elder brother. Without this part of the story, the parable would not have served its purpose. We remember that it was the murmuring of the scribes and Pharisees that caused the Lord to tell these stories. It was His intention that these people should see their own likeness in this uncharitable elder brother. This is the thought expressed in the following excerpt.

It is possible that this parable was a part of Jesus' rejoinder on some occasion to criticism of his too human applications of religious principles. His critics could insist on their theoretical agreement with him but all the while brand him as erratic and dangerous because his specific applications violated social conventions too radically. The elder brother, if representing the orthodox leadership of the Jewish Church, would serve to show their error: they saw only their violated traditions without glimpsing the larger truth that the original intent of these very traditions was the encourage-

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10. Ibid., p. 748.

11. D. O. Fuller, op. cit., p. 194.



ment and protection of personality. Their legalism led to a conception of religion so rigid and inflexible as to make it a moral straightjacket instead of a source of inspiration and of social ingeniousness. . . . The parable of the elder brother was a message to leaders who saw only a fraction of their mission. It was a thoroughly hopeful, skillfully ingratiating challenge to a more liberal conception of their task and at the same time a plea for tolerance and understanding of his own viewpoint and practice if they found them distasteful for themselves.<sup>12</sup>

The disciples asked the Lord to teach them how to pray. As an example of prayer He taught them what we know as "The Lord's Prayer." In order to encourage them to pray to the Father in time of need, Jesus tells them of the man who had to go to his friend at a most inconvenient hour and ask for aid. In spite of the unpleasantness of the circumstances, the friend granted the wish because he knew that the man calling upon him at this hour was very much in need of his help. Thus the Lord also is willing to grant the requests of those who pray to Him in their need. This thought has been well brought out by Matthew Henry.

The care which Providence casts upon us, we may with cheerfulness cast back upon Providence. We ought to continue instant in prayer, and watch in the same with all perseverance. To encourage us in prayer. If importunity could prevail thus with a man who was angry at it, much more with a God who is infinitely more kind and ready to do good to us than we are to one another, and is not angry at our importunity, but accepts it, especially when it is for spiritual mercies that we are importunate. If he does not answer our prayers presently, yet he will in due time; if we continue to pray.<sup>13</sup>

We have a similar treatment of the text by Golladay.

He who prays aright must have faith in God: confidence

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12. Albert E. Barnett, Understanding the Parables of Our Savior, pp. 150 - 152.



not only in His wisdom and power; but in His fatherly disposition, His willingness to do the very best for us that our highest interests will permit. So all prayers for temporal blessings must be subject to the perfect knowledge and will of God. That is the way Jesus prayed. We need not be afraid. God's will is a good will. And He overrules all things to this end.<sup>14</sup>

In Luke 18 the Lord tells a parable to "some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others." This is the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. In it the Lord condemns not only the self-righteous attitude of the Pharisees but the fact that they deliberately looked down upon other people as being less righteous than they. Honorius of Autun is again quoted by Taylor as pressing the details of the parable too far in his application.

By the two men who went up into the temple to pray, two peoples, the Jewish and the Gentile are meant. The Pharisee who went to the altar is the Jewish people, who possessed the Sanctuary and the Ark. He tells aloud his merits in the temple because in the world he boasts of his observance of the Law. The Publican who stands afar off is the Gentile people, who were far off from the worship of God. He did not lift up his eyes to heaven, because the Gentile was agape at the things of earth. He beat his breast when he bewailed his error through penitance; and because he humbled himself in confession, God exalted him through pardon. Let us also, beloved, thus stand afar off, deeming ourselves unworthy of the holy sacraments and the companionship of the saints.<sup>15</sup>

Luther has caught the complete meaning of the parable and presented it very clearly. He says:

The Savior here teaches us all to understand better every day what we are and have, saying: If you have money, health, and other possessions, make good use of them; I do not bestow them grudgingly; I delight

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14. R. E. Golladay, Eisenach Gospels, p. 150.

15. Honorius of Autun, op. cit.)



in giving and will give still more; but do not exalt yourself, nor despise others on account of it. Remember that those who have less than you can have the same gracious God as you. Therefore do not despise them; let them be your equals, and God shall be praised by you all. The false saints do not honor God, but dishonor Him, though they may not do it in word or in public.<sup>16</sup>

Jesus preached to the Jews that He was the King of the Jews and that He would rule over His Kingdom. To many of the Jews this meant a restoration of the empire of David and the reinstatement of the Jewish nation to its former political power. This was of course wrong and those who understood the true nature of Jesus' Kingdom knew it. Even these people some times did not understand the real nature of Jesus' Kingdom. They thought that the Kingdom would come immediately and they failed to realize that they themselves had a role to play in the world before this Kingdom would come, whether it be in the very near future or much later. Jesus attempts to tell these people of their obligations in the parable of The Pounds in which the nobleman left his home giving each of his ten servants ten pounds which they were to use for the purpose of making more money while he was gone. Upon his return he commanded those who had exercised wise stewardship and gained more wealth. Those who had not made a profitable use of the money allotted them were sharply reprimanded and were deprived of the few pounds they were granted. The point that the Lord wants these people to understand is that while they are here on earth they should be patient in awaiting the coming

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16. Martin Luther, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 408.



Kingdom by ministering unto their fellowmen. It is the inactivity of the people that the Lord wishes to reprove.

In this parable it seems logical to presume that the nobleman in the story might be a figure of Christ and that the treatment accorded him would then be symbolical of that given Christ. This is not the purpose of the parable and we have no right to assume that the comparison goes any farther than the point suggested. It is also an invalid conclusion to say that those that hated the noblemen represent the Jewish nation. The following three sermon extracts represent errors in interpretation on these points.

The Jews were especially Christ's fellow-'citizens,' for, according to the flesh, He was of the seed of Abraham, a Jew, and a member of the Jewish polity; and they 'hated Him' not merely in His life, and unto death; but every persecution of His servants, the stoning of Stephen, the beheading of James, the persecutions of Paul, and all the wrongs done to His people because they were His, these each and all were messages of defiance sent after Him, implicit declarations upon their part that they would not have Him for their king.<sup>17</sup>

A certain man of high birth, for he is the Lord from heaven, and is entitled by birth to the kingdom; but he goes into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom. Christ must go to heaven, to sit down at the right hand of the Father there, and to receive from Him honour and glory, before the Spirit was poured out by which his kingdom was to be set up on earth, and before a church was to be set up for him in the Gentile world. He must receive the kingdom and return. Christ returned when the Spirit was poured out, when Jerusalem was destroyed, by which he had personally conversed with, was wholly worn off by death, and gone to give up their account.<sup>18</sup>

The Nobleman of our text unquestionably represents Jesus

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17. R. C. Trench, Notes on the Parables of Our Lord, p. 390.  
 18. Matthew Henry, op. cit., p. 786.



Christ. He was here on earth, and established a Kingdom. He provided means by which it is to grow, develop. There was to be a long period of this growth, development. The pound just as certainly represents the means of grace, the word and sacraments, all that God in Christ has given to the Church, not only for the nurture of its own life; but for the conversion and salvation of the world.<sup>19</sup>

Our next story is that of Lazarus and the Rich Man.

Some have argued as to whether this is a parable or an account of historical fact. It is not our purpose to establish either position. The application of the text to our lives as Christians remains the same. The narrative itself does demonstrate the terrors of being separated from God and the terrible feeling that results from not being able to do anything about it.

The main point of the parable lies in a different part of the story. In the last part of the account we hear that Abraham declares that if the rich man's brothers wish to avoid the suffering of hell, they must do one thing and that is to accept the preaching of Moses and the Prophets. This is the only means of grace. Miracles and demonstrations will not convert any one. Those who seek salvation must seek it in the Word of God.

There is no point in attempting to reconstruct the situation of Lazarus lying at the door of the rich man and thus trying to accuse the rich man of being uncharitable. Nothing is said of the type of burial received by either of these men. Such details and any conclusions based on them are invalid. We cannot make any statements on these matters on the basis

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19. R. E. Golladay, op. cit., p. 289.



of the text.

In applying the text we must remain with the points suggested above. This has been very well done in the two paragraphs which follow.

"They have Moses and the prophets Let them hear them, and mix faith with them, and that will be sufficient to keep them from this place of torment." By this it appears that there is sufficient evidence in the Old Testament, in Moses and the prophets, to convince those that will hear them impartially that there is another life after this, and a state of rewards and punishments for good and bad men; for that was the thing which the rich man would have his brethren assured of, and for that they are turned over to Moses and the prophets.<sup>20</sup>

Thus one must hear Moses and the prophets, that one may learn from them to believe in Christ and to be pious, This the rich man did not do, and must therefore be eternally damned and suffer, together with all those who have Moses and the prophets, but still do not obey their teaching. But those who hear and obey, that is those who believe in Christ and know that God for His Son's sake would be merciful unto us, not reckon our sins against us and save us, and who accordingly live in the fear of God, they belong, with Lazarys, into Abraham's bosom, and shall be eternally saved.<sup>21</sup>

In the last chapters of St. Matthew we have a record of Jesus speaking to His disciples of the last days of His living here on earth and of the last times before the end of the world. Among these discourses we find two parables that are intended to teach them some lessons about their own conduct during the latter days of the world. They are the parables of Ten Virgins is intended to impress upon their minds the fact that they must at all times be ready for the coming of the Lord and that it is a matter of personal preparation which no one

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20. Matthew Henry, op. cit., p. 763.

21. Martin Luther, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 252.



else can do for them.

In the interpretation of this parable Matthew Henry has gone too far into the details and given them spiritual significance that they actually do not have.

The heart is the vessel, which it is our wisdom to get furnished; for out of a good treasure there, good things must be brought; but if that root be rottenness, the blossoms will be dust. Grace is the oil which we must have in this vessel; in the tabernacle there was constant provision made for oil for the light. Our light must shine before men in good works, but this cannot be, or not long, unless there be a fixed active principle in the heart, brethren, from which we must act in every thing we do in religion, with an eye to what is before us. . . . The wise virgins kept their lamps burning, but did not keep themselves awake. Note, too many good Christians, when they have been long in profession, grow remiss in their preparations for Christ's second coming; they intermit their care, abate their zeal, their graces are not lively, nor their works found perfect before God; and though all love be not lost, yet the first love is left. If it is hard to the disciples to watch with Christ an hour, much more to watch with him an age. I sleep, saith the spouse, but my heart awakes. Observe, first, they slumbered, and then they slept. Note, one degree of carelessness and remissness makes way for another. Those that allow themselves in slumbering, will scarcely keep themselves from sleeping; therefore dread the beginning of spiritual decays.<sup>22</sup>

Spurgeon has come to the point of the parable he makes the following observations:

What is this readiness? "They that were ready." It is not a fruit of nature. It must be a work of grace. It mainly consists in a secret work wrought in us. In being reconciled to God by the death of His son. In being regenerated, and so made meet for glory. In being anointed with the Spirit, and fitted for holy service. . . . The unready were never ready to enter in with the King. They had no heart care to be found ready, hence flaming external lamps, but no hidden internal oil. This exclusion was universal to all who were not ready. It was complete; "the door was shut," --shut for

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22. Matthew Henry, op. cit., p. 369.



those without quite assuredly as for those within. It was just; for they were not ready, and so slighted the King. It was final. Since the fatal news that the door was shut, no news has<sup>23</sup> come that it has been opened, or that it ever will be.

Just before he gives a description of Judgment Day, the Lord tells another parable in which He emphasizes the importance of using one's spiritual gifts as he awaits the coming of the Lord. The parable of the Talents has often been used to teach people the proper stewardship of time, talents, and money. This is the use made of it by Hartenberger in the following:

Jesus has entrusted to His servants various gifts which He wants them to use for the expansion of His Church. He has given to them both spiritual and material gifts for this very purpose. Some have received many, some only a few, but all have received some gifts from Him. He gives them according to their several ability.<sup>24</sup>

A better use of the parable has been made by Matthew Henry in stressing the fact that we are in a "state of work and business" as we live among the Christians of this world. He quotes from Seneca and makes the following application:

It is the duty of a man to render himself beneficial to those around him; to a great number if possible; but if this be denied him, to a few; to his intimate connections; or, at least, to himself. He that is useful to others, may be reckoned a common good. And whoever entitles himself to his own approbation is serviceable to others, as forming himself to these habits which will result in their favor.<sup>25</sup>

H. H. McQuilkin has adopted the view that the talents

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23. D. O. Fuller, op. cit., pp. 189 - 190.

24. Hartenberger, op. cit., p. 119.

25. Seneca, De Otio Sapient., quoted in Matthew Henry, op. cit., p. 375.



spoken of in the texts are not at all the material or mental gifts given men, but spiritual endowments.

This is precisely what Christ is talking about in the Parable of the Talents. He is saying that God, whom He portrays as the householder, gives to men certain values, or interests, of a spiritual character, to be held in trust for Him by them, to be used with a view to their increase and to be accounted for by them when He comes to make a reckoning with them. . . . We talk volubly of stewardship, little realizing often what vast responsibilities are involved in the relationship. . . . The fact of trusteeship and the tremendously heavy responsibility attaching thereto are deeply imbedded in our Lord's words in this parable. . . . This parable is for initiated souls, for those who have come apart with Christ and have confessed His name and professed their willingness to labor for the advancement of His Kingdom. . . . Our "talent" is something Christ Himself has given us, something we should not have possessed if He had not brought it to us and committed it to our care. It is something which has come, not as a result of creation out of the dust of the earth, but as a result of re-creation in the new birth at the hands of God's Son our Savior. . . . The words which fell from His lips are a part of the "goods" He has left with His disciples for safe-keeping and increase. . . . Lying behind His words and reflected in them there are certain mighty forces of the heart of Christ which He has brought to His disciples and has committed to them as a sacred trust to be used by them for their own enrichment of soul and for the salvation of those about them. And the first among them let us name His love. . . . It is His intention that His disciples shall trade with the joy He has left with them. That means that they are to live in it and pass it on to other. . . . Peace is a part of the talent given over to our trusteeship. . . . The talents of eternal life and His abiding presence are the last given for our using here on earth.<sup>26</sup>

In Matthew 20 the Lord tells the parable of the Vineyard. It is His purpose in this parable to point out to His disciples that there is no connection between the amount of work a man does here on earth and the fact that he becomes an heir

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26. H. H. McQuilkin, "The Parable of the Talents," The Biblical Review, XIV, No. 1, pp. 24 ff.



of salvation. Heaven is a reward of grace. The standards of God are far different from those used by men in paying people for the work they do. Matthew Henry has taken the details of this parable and applied to them meanings which distort the purpose of the parable.

This seems to be the principal scope of this parable, to show that the Jews should be first called into the vineyard, and many of them should come at the call; but, at length, the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles, and they should receive it, and be admitted to equal privileges and advantages with the Jews; should be fellow-citizens with the saints, which the Jews, even those of them that believed, would be very much disgusted at, but without reason. . . . God is the great Householder. As a householder, he has work that he will have to be done, and servants that he will have to be doing. . . . Whence will they be hired? Out of the market-place, where, till they are hired into God's service, they stand idle, all the day idle. The soul of man stands ready to be hired into some service or other; it was created to work, and is either a servant to iniquity, or a servant to righteousness. . . . Till we are hired into the service of God, we are standing all the day idle; a sinful state, though a state of drudgery to Satan, may really be called a state of idleness. . . . The gospel call is given to those that stand idle in the market-place. The market-place is the place of concourse, and there wisdom cries, there the children are playing. . . . The church is God's vineyard; it is of his planting, watering, and fencing; and the fruits of it must be to his honour and praise. We are all called upon to be laborers in the vineyard. The work of religion is vineyard-work, pruning, dressing, digging, watering, fencing, weeding. We have each of us our own vineyard to keep, our own soul; and it is God's and to be kept and dressed for him. . . . It is but a day's work that is here done. The time of life is the day in which we must work the works of him that sent us into the world.<sup>27</sup>

In the following two excerpts from sermons by Luther and Kuegele the proper point of view is emphasized.

Christ employs this parable to teach us the difference

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27. Matthew Henry, op. cit., pp. 281 - 283.



between His kingdom and the kingdom of this world. Affairs in the former differ entirely from those in the latter, in which there is an inequality among persons. Our Gospel has nothing to do with this existing inequality in the world, where the master has many possessions and the servant who labors for him none, or but few; the parable simply refers to the kingdom of God, and teaches us that in it all inequality is abolished, that everything is common property there, and that one shall have as much and be esteemed as much, as the other.<sup>28</sup>

In the kingdom of Christ an altogether rule obtains than in worldly transactions. In this world the rule is: as the labor, so the wages. That is equity and justice. But in the kingdom of Christ there is neither earning nor paying of wages. Whatever a man receives of spiritual gifts, is all alone by the grace of God, and never because that man earned it or in any way deserved it. In Christ's kingdom all is grace, and nothing but grace.<sup>29</sup>

The parables of the kingdom recorded in Matthew 13 have their own interpretation given by the Lord Himself. They are intended to show the progress and fortunes of the Word of God among the people of the world as it is used to spread His Kingdom. The parable of the Sower is intended to demonstrate the reception that the Word of God receives in the hearts of various hearers. Luther has applied this parable very well as he says:

Let every one learn from this parable that the Gospel will always meet with opposition; that some will be converted by it, while the greater portion of its hearers, yea even three-fourths of them, will take offense and disregard it. The result is that many are called, as Christ says in another Gospel, but only a few are chosen. . . Let no one therefore be offended at the Gospel, though it encounters much opposition; the cause of this are the wicked and malicious hearts, in which the devil rules. It is not the fault of the seed if it does not grow by the way-side, or upon the rock, or among the thorns.<sup>30</sup>

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28. Martin Luther, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 281.

29. Kuegele, op. cit., p. 157.

30. Martin Luther, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 303.



Warren L. Rogers has drawn a good word of encouragement from this parable for pastors whose ministry is of a rather difficult nature. He reminds them that they are facing a tremendous amount of opposition and that the Word is bound to receive a very hostile reception in the hearts of most people. Such a reception should remind one that the important thing is that we do our task faithfully and then depend upon the Lord to make the Word prosper.<sup>31</sup>

The parable of the Tares demonstrates the fact that people will be found in the Church of Jesus Christ who are not the products of the seed of God's Word. They are the products of the tares of false teachings and ideas scattered in the field by the enemy of the Church, Satan himself. We are also to remember that these tares are very much like those people whom we recognize as Christians in their appearance. In attempting to remove them from the church, we are apt to cause offense to some of the weaker Christians who would not understand the true reason for their removal. This might result in their defection and thus two instead of one soul would be lost. This is not an invitation to indifference toward those that live among us as Christians, but an admonition to watchfulness and also to an exercise of Christian love and charity to the weaker Christians.

Our last selection in this chapter is taken from Luther in demonstration of a proper application of the parable of the Tares.

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31. W. L. Rogers, in Preachers and Preaching in Detroit.



Among such Christians, who, though yet in weakness, are the good seed, we find the baneful tares, the false Christians, who pride themselves in the name and boast of being the good ground. We have to permit and suffer this, since we know that the tares cannot be gathered up, nor can the Church be entirely cleansed of them. . . The enemy, the devil, is the mischief-maker; he, as a malicious neighbor might do, goes forth by night, when others unsuspectingly sleep, and sows the tares amidst the wheat. He takes possession of the hearts so that they do not heed the Word, become more and more estranged from it day by day, being led or driven by the devil, according to his own pleasure, from sin to sin and from shame to shame. . . Let therefore every Christian, particularly every minister of the Gospel, learn from this parable to desist from the vain endeavor to have the Church composed of perfect saints. The devil prevents this by scattering his seed over the field; and he does this so clandestinely that it is not observed until the blades spring forth and grow.<sup>32</sup>

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32. Martin Luther op. cit., vol. 2, p. 273.



## VI. Summary and Conclusions

In this paper we have discussed the problems of expounding and applying narrative texts in preaching. We have placed particular emphasis on the use of allegory in the interpretation of these texts. Although the sermons based on allegorical interpretation might in themselves contain edifying Christian truths, there are certain dangers connected with the method that make it necessary to condemn it as entirely unsatisfactory for use by the preacher whose task it is to present his hearers with the truth as he finds it in the Word of God.

If the allegorical method of interpretation were to be permitted as a legitimate system of expounding the meaning of a text, there would be no limit to the meanings that a preacher might invent on the basis of any text that he might choose. The congregation would be constantly exposed to his peculiar ideas and fancies and he could always hide behind his method of exegesis for protection.

Such a method of exegesis and application destroys the faith of the layman in his own ability to read and interpret the Bible. Dr. Arndt expresses this danger very well.

The members of a church may look with wonder and amazement at the preacher in the pulpit when he gives a novel, interesting allegorical meaning, let us say, to the story of Ruth. But do not forget that such exegetical exhibitions may have serious results. The Christian hearer may become afraid of using the Bible, thinking that it is an obscure book, which it takes special study to understand. Or it may be that he will consider allegorizing comparatively easy and try his own hand at it, with the consequences that to him soon everything in the Scriptures will be topsyturvy. But, pray, why should not the pew indulge in this sort



of religious game if the pulpit does? <sup>1</sup>

Preachers are constantly telling their people that they should read their Bibles. It is presented to them as a clear book in which any one with normal intelligence can find the light of the Gospel. This is certainly true. Scripture is clear. It has a single, clearly stated meaning in all its passages. If we are to maintain the faith of our people in the Bible as such a book, we must avoid any sort of interpretation that might lead them to believe that the Bible is a book of double meanings, of hidden, mystical spiritual truths that cannot be understood by any one except the expert theologian. This is actually what can result if we venture into the use of allegorical interpretation.

Dr. Arndt in the same article quoted above says that the Scriptures are made an apocalyptic book with seven seals by those who employ the use of allegory in their exegesis.

Another unfortunate result of this method is the fact that very often the useful, intended application of Scriptural truths is lost. In the parables, for example, there is usually a very powerful, enlightening truth that is to be demonstrated if the preacher will but study his text and context to find it. By interpreting the various details of such narratives in applying to them countless spiritual meanings, he not only hides the true meaning, but thoroughly distorts the meaning of the text itself. As far as his

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1. Wm. Arndt, "The Preacher and Allegorical Interpretation," Concordia Theological Monthly, II, (Sept. 1931), p. 697.



hearers are concerned, the text has been loaded with the meaning he has attached to it and unless somehow they are informed otherwise, they will never come to an understanding of the real truth that the Savior would have them to learn from it.

The task of the preacher, then, is not to find as many meanings for his text as possible, but to preach his text to the congregation as God has given it, presenting it with the meaning that the Holy Spirit has given to it. His task is exegesis, not eisegesis. The former is presenting the truth of Scripture, the latter is actually falsifying Scriptures, no matter what form it wears.

It is argued that something must be done to avoid repetition and monotony in presenting the truths of Scripture and that the use of allegory is a very effective way to add variety and newness to these old truths. Surely we cannot permit any one to resort to falsifying Scriptures just for the sake of avoiding what he calls monotony. There must be another solution. There are several. A preacher may obtain variety in his sermons by using different points of view in presenting these facts. He may use free texts or a different series of pericopes. These are very mechanical methods, however, and may not produce the desired results.

There is one method of preaching that will make any form of allegory unnecessary. If a preacher uses the expository method in his pulpit work, he has found the solution to his problem. First of all, it leads him into the true meaning



of his text, which is usually such a tremendously important truth that there will be no desire to find other hidden or mythical meanings in his text. This single truth alone will provide an abundance of sermon material by the time he has found the pertinent parallel passages, the Biblical illustrations usable in presenting the truth, and the importance of this particular lesson in the lives of his hearers.

If a text is to provide sufficient sermon material, it must be long enough. This does not mean in the number of words only. There must be a complete idea in the text. Therefore the idea of using only single phrases or very short verses of Scriptures is apt to defeat this purpose.

[Very few single passages of Scripture contain in themselves sufficient sermonic material for an interesting, edifying, and instructive sermon.]

If the preacher has in mind some specific idea that he feels he must present to his people in the form of a sermon, he must be absolutely certain that the text he chooses is a clear statement of this truth or else he will be accommodating the text and forcing on to it a meaning that is not there. This is obviously a misuse of Holy Scriptures. The only way in which he can avoid such misuse is by thoroughly studying his text and conscientiously trying to find in it the meaning the Holy Spirit intended to place there.

Such thorough study of Scripture is in itself a strong influence that will draw the preacher away from the temptation to use allegory. He can become so thoroughly engrossed in



the meaning of his text, so filled with the message that it has for his people and himself, that there will be no desire to go outside for inspiration. If his own heart has been warmed up to a text, he will have no difficulty in inspiring his hearers with the same enthusiasm. It is taken for granted that he has the proper ability to be an exegete and expositor of Scriptures.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." All that a preacher need ever to say to his people can be found in the Bible. With diligent study, meditation, and prayer the Holy Spirit will help him find what he needs, and that without the use of illegitimate allegory.



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