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A COMPARISON OF THE PARABLES OF
THE TALENTS AND THE POUNDS

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Exegetical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by
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June 1962

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Short Title

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CHAPTER I

THE NEED FOR AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF THE PARABLES OF THE TALENTS AND THE POUNDS

The purpose of this paper is to present an exegetical study of the parables of the Talents and the Pounds in order to compare them in terms of their content, purpose, and character. The parable of the Talents is found in the Gospel according to St. Matthew (25:14-30), while the parable of the Pounds is recorded in the Gospel according to St. Luke (19:11-27).

The need for such a study becomes apparent if one but scans the various commentaries or specialized parable studies which deal with these two stories. Because these parables at once demonstrate both a remarkable similarity and yet a striking individuality, there is almost a singular lack of uniformity on the part of the commentators as to the relationship of the one parable to the other. It is our intention to deal with these parables rather exhaustively in the light of modern research in an attempt to find a solution to this problem.

We propose to carry out our purpose within the scope of four chapters. Chapter II deals with the general questions of introduction involved in parable exegesis. It is concerned first, to present a brief outline of recent tendencies in parable exegesis; second, to define the term,

"parable"; and third, to decide on a proper interpretation of Mark 4:10-12, where the evangelist records the reason for Jesus' choosing the parable as a medium for his preaching and teaching activity.

Chapter III reviews the respective contexts of the parables of the Talents and the Pounds. First, it takes cognizance of the fact that eschatology, both realized and futurist, plays a major role in the ground plan of St. Matthew's Gospel. At the same time, it demonstrates that the question of history is a primary concern in the Gospel of St. Luke. Furthermore, an examination of the immediate contexts of these parables reveals that both are eschatologically oriented. The conclusion, then, is that both the parable of the Talents and the parable of the Pounds has an identical eschatological reference, despite the fact that each Gospel moves within its own unique framework and theological orientation.

Chapter IV presents a detailed analysis of these two parables. First, the parables are translated; second, a preliminary comparison is made of the two texts; third, each text is handled in detail; and fourth, the problem of the Sitz im Leben for each parable is discussed.

Finally, Chapter V summarizes our study. The longer discussion may be summed up in the following statements:

1. Both parables share a common foundation--the story of the master who proves the fidelity of his slaves.

2. Despite the similarity of a common story, however, each parable displays a distinct individuality.
3. This tension between similarity and dissimilarity suggests that Jesus told the same basic story on two different occasions, each time adapting it, adding to it, or changing it in order to serve the particular situation. This explains why we have the two versions as they are.
4. Because each evangelist transmits a different version of the same basic story, these two parables could hardly stem from a single Q pericope, but must be traced to the sources M and L, respectively.
5. In regard to their content, both parables are eschatological parables in the narrower sense of the term, i.e., they both relate to the Final Judgment and the Second Coming of Christ.
6. Furthermore, both parables are allegorical parables, for each evangelist attributes a significance to the characters and events of his story which stands beyond their literal meaning.
7. Both parables also serve Christian paraenesis-- they exhort Christians to absolute diligence in the tasks of the Savior.
8. Finally, the examination of these parables allows us both to appreciate the progress of present day parable exegesis as well as to consider its principal danger.

CHAPTER II

GENERAL QUESTIONS OF INTRODUCTION IN PARABLE EXEGESIS

A. Some Recent Tendencies in Parable Exegesis

A survey of recent tendencies in parable exegesis ultimately has to do with the work of three men, namely A. Jülicher, C. H. Dodd, and J. Jeremias. It is largely by means of the principles these men have laid down that present day scholarship attempts to understand the parables.

The concern of A. Jülicher was to free parable exegesis from the allegorical method of interpretation.¹ In the first volume of his two volume set, Jülicher traces the entire history of parable exegesis beginning with the earliest church fathers.² He demonstrates how one scholar after another persists in forcing the parables to support the massive structure of the church's theology. Almost every man operates with the fixed principle that what the parables do not contain explicitly, they still contain implicitly.³ A classic example of such exegesis

¹Adolf Jülicher, Die Gleichnisreden Jesu (zweite Auflage; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1899), I, 50.

²Ibid., pp. 203ff.

³Ibid.

is St. Augustine's interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Some of the particulars are the following: The man in the parable is Adam himself, Jerusalem is the heavenly city, Jericho signifies the moon and, therefore, man's mortality, the thieves are the Devil and his angels, the beating of the man is persuading him to sin, leaving him half dead refers to man's dichotomous nature-- he lives because he knows God but he is dead because he is ravaged by sin, the priest and the Levite refer to the priesthood and ministry of the Old Testament which are powerless to mediate salvation, the Samaritan refers to Jesus, the caring for the beaten man is the work of salvation, the beast refers to Christ's incarnation, the inn is the church, the "morrow" is the resurrection, the money indicates the two precepts of love, and the innkeeper is St. Paul.⁴

Jülicher's reaction to such fanciful interpretation was sharply negative. He asserted that each parable is to be understood only in terms of its literal meaning.⁵ The one point of contact between the story as such and the spiritual truth which it intends to convey is to be found in the tertium comparationis.⁶ The necessity for this is

⁴C. H. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (revised edition; London: Nisbet & Co., 1950), pp. 11f.

⁵Jülicher, op. cit., pp. 80, 117.

⁶Ibid.

twofold: first, it protects the members of a parable from being forced to render spiritual truths which they do not contain; second, it also guards against attributing the members an independent value apart from the whole.

Furthermore, Jülicher stressed that the interpreter was to concern himself primarily with the meaning of the original parable.⁷ To do this, one must distinguish between tradition and redaction within any unit, between the parable as Jesus originally told it and the form in which the church has handed it on.⁸

The ultimate goal toward which Jülicher strives is to focus the total text of any parable into the broadest general truth which it will admit.⁹ An example of this is the following maxim by which he explains the ultimate meaning of the parables of the Talents and the Pounds: "auf treue in allem, was Gott uns anvertraut hat."¹⁰ Jülicher advocates this, of course, partly because such a maxim presents a complete defense against the allegorical method. Where the allegorist looks for meaning in every detail, Jülicher sums up the entire parable with a single generalization. But Jülicher further advocates this because

⁷Ibid., pp. 1-24.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., p. 105.

¹⁰Ibid., II, 481.

in his opinion Jesus was primarily a teacher of wisdom.¹¹ As such, Jülicher reasons that it is precisely the general maxim which will most suitably bring the original meaning of any parable to light.

To summarize, Jülicher emphasizes the following basic principles in his parable exegesis: (1) that the exegete is to recover the original parable from the text just as Jesus narrated it; (2) that the story of the parable is to be understood in its literal terms; (3) and that the ultimate meaning of a parable is to be rendered according to its tertium comparationis as a general maxim.

Jülicher's arguments were forceful and convincing. As a result, his principles of parable exegesis soon became the norm for scholarship in this field. But with the rise of Formgeschichte and its emphasis on a specific Sitz im Leben for each Gospel pericope, criticism gradually mounted against him, particularly at the point of his detached "maxim-type" applications of the parables.

Perhaps more than anyone else it was C. H. Dodd who initiated this criticism. He asserted that Jesus was not "an eminently sound and practical teacher, who patiently led simple minds to appreciate the great enduring commonplaces of morals and religion,"¹² but that, in reality, he

¹¹Ibid., I, 148ff., 182.

¹²Dodd, op. cit., p. 25.

bore a message of crisis; hence, his parables, too, "bear upon the actual and critical situation in which Jesus and his hearers stood."¹³ But this means, argues Dodd, that we cannot content ourselves with merely reducing the parables to general truths, but that we must understand each parable in terms of its role in the mission and message of Jesus.¹⁴

But this, in turn, implies that the interpreter must now determine each "particular setting" in which Jesus first delivered any one of his parables.¹⁵ One clue for this is to be found "in such ideas as may be supposed to have been in the minds of the hearers of Jesus during his ministry."¹⁶ Once this has been accomplished, Dodd claims that it is then possible to determine the original meaning of any parable, a meaning which is "congruous with the interpretation of His own ministry offered by Jesus in explicit and unambiguous sayings. . . ."¹⁷

Thus, Dodd builds on the work of Jülicher. At the same time, he offers a radically different view of Jesus' person and work and insists that the application of the parables can be determined only by considering the original situation in which Jesus first narrated them.

¹³Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁷Ibid.

The emphases which Dodd brought forward were adopted by J. Jeremias. The latter's contribution consists in carrying Dodd's work to its logical conclusion, but with modifications. Whereas Dodd restricts himself to the parables of the kingdom and interprets them in terms of his concept of "realized eschatology,"¹⁸ Jeremias deals with all of the parables and attempts to determine every insight which they offer into the times and message of Jesus.¹⁹ In brief, Jeremias works on a broader basis than Dodd. Furthermore, whereas Dodd is content to lay down two very general rules for deriving the original Sitz im Leben of a parable,²⁰ Jeremias rigorously defines no less than nine fundamental laws, the application of which is designed to locate every possible stratum of tradition and redaction recognizable in the parabolic units.²¹ The immediate goal for this is to identify each of the two or more Sitz im Leben which any one parable has served.²² Ultimately, however, Jeremias's goal is to work back to the "ipsissima

¹⁸Ibid., p. 51.

¹⁹Joachim Jeremias, Die Gleichnisse Jesu (fünfte Auflage; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958), passim.

²⁰Dodd, op. cit., p. 32.

²¹Jeremias, op. cit., pp. 5-97.

²²Ibid., passim.

vox Jesu."²³ Where Dodd, then, searches the parables in order to make them support his concept of realized eschatology, Jeremias searches them in an attempt to meet the "historical Jesus."

A summary of recent tendencies in parable exegesis reveals the following:

1. The allegorical method of interpretation as practiced in former centuries has been generally discredited.²⁴
2. In its place there is the attempt to understand each parable in terms of its original Sitz im Leben in the life and mission of Jesus.
3. This, in turn, has led scholars to attempt to distinguish between tradition and redaction within any parable--between the parable as Jesus spoke it and the parable as we have it in the Gospels.
4. Recently, some scholars have also made parable exegesis serve dogmatic purposes as, for example, when Dodd uses the parables to postulate his doctrine of realized eschatology, or when Jeremias uses them to locate the very words of the "historical Jesus."

Despite the great contributions which Jülicher, Dodd, and Jeremias have made to parable exegesis, that type of method which they have developed betrays at least one dangerous weakness which R. Morgenthaler notes--that the attempt

²³Ibid., p. 16.

²⁴In order to avoid later misunderstandings, it is necessary to point out that one must draw a sharp distinction between allegorical interpretations which are justified, and those which are not. The exegete is justified in interpreting a parable "allegorically" when he has good reason to believe that the evangelist himself understood the parable in this way. For example, when Matthew, in chap. 24-25,

to derive an original and specific Sitz im Leben for each parable can often lead to pure fabrication. ²⁵ To measure the truth of this, one need only read some of the purely hypothetical constructions which Dodd and Jeremias formulate in order to reconstruct the original life situation of several of the parables. We shall encounter an example of this as we advance into our work on the Talents and the Pounds.

B. The Definition of παραβολή

A primary problem of introduction in parable exegesis is the definition of the term "parable." The word itself is the Greek counterpart of the Hebrew מִשְׁלָּה (Mashal).

Παραβολή may be defined as "eine Redeform, die durch Nebeneinanderstellung von Gleichem, durch Vergleichung zu

presents Jesus' discourse on the last times and the Final Judgment and includes in this section a series of parables to admonish the disciples to watchfulness and faithfulness, it becomes obvious that the master who goes away (Matthew 24:45,46) and the bridegroom who suddenly appears (Matthew 25:6) are none other than Jesus Christ, that the slaves refer to the disciples (Christians) (Matthew 24:45ff), and that the Lord's sudden return (Matthew 24:50) refers to Christ's Second Coming. In these instances, the entire context compels one to draw these conclusions. On the other hand, for the exegete to proceed allegorically without any textual motivation, such as St. Augustine does with the Parable of the Good Samaritan, is an unjustifiable approach to the text. In the last analysis, however, what is justifiable in parable exegesis and what is not can only be determined most often by sound judgment. Cf. Dodd, op. cit., pp. 21, 153, 162ff; Jeremias, op. cit., pp. 43ff.

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Robert Morganthaler, "Formgeschichte und Gleichnisauslegung," Theologische Zeitschrift, VI (Heft 1, 1950), 15f.

Stande kommt oder darauf beruht."²⁶ The point to note is that *παράβολή* emphasizes a comparison of two things placed side by side.

The difficulty, however, is that traditional exegesis has been accustomed to make sharp distinctions between the various types of comparisons. Jülicher differentiates between metaphor, allegory, and parable, and then divides the parable, in turn, into the similitude (Gleichnis), the fable (Fabel), and those narratives which present a noteworthy example (Beispielerzählung).²⁷

But Jeremias has shown that all of these distinctions are "an unfruitful endeavor" (ein unfruchtbares Bemühen). For the very character of the term *Mashal* is such that it comprehends all of these categories, and, what is more, it makes no distinction whatsoever between them.²⁸ Accordingly, it is pointless to attempt a detailed definition of *παράβολή* in the interest of bordering off one type of *Mashal* from another. On the other hand, such a definition is valuable in that it describes the character of a parable. One such definition is the following:

[A parable] is . . . a connected narrative, whether of events in human life or of a process in nature, by which some great spiritual truth is illustrated or enforced. It is not a mere similitude, which may

²⁶Jülicher, op. cit., p. 36.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 55ff., 58ff., 80, 98, 114.

²⁸Jeremias, op. cit., pp. 13f.

be expressed in a single clause; or even a detailed comparison of one thing with another; but a little history, which might be read merely for its own sake, but which, as used by the Great Teacher, was made the vehicle of instruction or warning, of comfort or condemnation.²⁹

The important thing to remember is that a parable presents a comparison. By narrating a story from the realm of common, human experience, Jesus presents a spiritual truth in line with his mission and message.

C. The Interpretation of Mark 4:10-12

Important for the interpretation of any parable is a clear understanding of Mark 4:10-12, since it is here that we are told the reason for Jesus' speaking in parables.

This passage reads as follows:

And when he was alone, those who were about him with the twelve asked him concerning the parables. And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables; so that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand; lest they should turn again, and be forgiven.

The extreme difficulty of interpreting this passage becomes apparent if one scans several of the commentaries. Jülicher, for example, believes that in view of the saving character of Jesus' mission, it is impossible to interpret Mark 4:10-12, in the sense that Jesus wanted to conceal truth rather than reveal it.³⁰ Jülicher's only explanation

²⁹William M. Taylor, Parables of Our Savior (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1886), p. 2.

³⁰Jülicher, op. cit., p. 146

is that Mark fashioned this saying for a specific reason, in this case as an attempt to explain why not everyone who heard Jesus' message believed on him. Mark, then, reasoned as follows: all people who heard Jesus did not believe; therefore, Jesus intentionally concealed truth as well as revealed it.³¹ In this way, Jülicher postulates a tension between Mark and Jesus and claims that it is "either--or"--either believe Jesus when he says that he came in order that men might know the truth, or believe Mark who says that Jesus purposely concealed the truth by speaking in parables.³²

Dodd to a certain extent echoes Jülicher, declaring that Mark 4:10-12 is "a piece of apostolic teaching," which stems from the Hellenistic world, where "the use of myths, allegorically interpreted, as vehicles of esoteric doctrine, was widespread, and something of the kind would be looked for from Christian teachers."³³ So Dodd likewise represents a theory of misunderstanding between the early church and Jesus.

A third and very recent interpretation of Mark 4:10-12, is that presented by W. Marxsen. Marxsen bases his exegesis of the passage on the principles of Redaktionsgeschichte.

³¹Ibid., p. 147.

³²Ibid., p. 148.

³³Dodd, op. cit., pp. 14f.

According to him Mark 4:11,12, stem from the hand of Mark.³⁴ As such, they represent redaction and, therefore, are to be interpreted out of the age in which Mark lived.³⁵ Consequently, this means that we are no longer dealing with Jesus' situation nor the reason why he spoke in parables, but that we are dealing with a situation of the early church.³⁶ The followers, then, to whom Jesus addresses this passage, represent the church.³⁷ The point of reference is the church's total preaching activity, and not her mere recitation of parables.³⁸ "The secret of the kingdom of God" (Mark 4:11) refers to Jesus' Messiahship, which has been revealed to the church through the Spirit.³⁹ Those who are "without" (Mark 4:11) refers to all who live beyond the fold of the church, and because they have no share in the Holy Spirit, they are not enlightened, i.e. they do not recognize Jesus as the Messiah.⁴⁰ The result is that the

³⁴Willi Marxsen, "Redaktionsgeschichtliche Erklärung der sogenannten Parabeltheorie des Markus," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, LII (Heft 2, 1955), 260.

³⁵Ibid., p. 267.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid., p. 268.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 268ff.

preaching of the church strikes these people as parables, i.e., riddles.⁴¹ But because Mark's text also refers to repentance and forgiveness, we have here a reference to the church's conviction that at any time her preaching may take effect so that those who do not believe may repent and find forgiveness.⁴²

While this interpretation is certainly provocative, it rests on at least one presupposition which is very questionable--that Mark 4:11,12 is to be interpreted solely out of the time of Mark and not at all from the time of Jesus.

Jeremias, on the other hand, presents a very acceptable interpretation of Mark 4:10-12.⁴³ He explains the Greek of our text in terms of its counter-translation into Aramaic, and then renders the passage and his conclusion as follows:

"Euch hat Gott das Geheimnis der Gottesherrschaft geschenkt; denen aber, die draussen sind, ist alles rätselvoll, auf dass sie (wie geschrieben steht), sehen und doch nicht sehen, hören und doch nicht verstehen, es sei denn, dass sie umkehren und Gott ihnen vergebende." Das Logion redet, das ist unser Ergebnis, also gar nicht von den Gleichnissen Jesu, sondern von seiner Predigt überhaupt. Den Jüngern

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., p. 270.

⁴³ Cf. also the fine study of this passage made by T. W. Manson, The Teaching of Jesus (seventh edition; Cambridge: The University Press, 1951), pp. 57-81. He states his conclusion (pp. 78f.) as follows: "the

ist das Geheimnis der gegenwärtigen Basileia enthüllt, den Draussenstehenden bleiben Jesu Worte dunkel, weil sie Seine Sendung nicht anerkennen und nicht Busse tun. So erfüllt sich an ihnen die furchtbare Weissagung von Jes. 6, 10. Dennoch bleibt eine Hoffnung: "tun sie Busse, so wird Gott ihnen vergeben." Der letzte Blick ruht auf Gottes vergebenden Barmherzigkeit.⁴⁴

According to Jeremias, then, Mark 4:11-12 deals with Jesus' total preaching activity and refers only indirectly to his speaking in parables. Seen from this point of view, Mark states that the purpose of the parables, even as the purpose of all Jesus' preaching, was not to proclaim riddles but to preach the one mystery of God's sovereign reign,

form in which the words were spoken by Jesus approximated to what we find in the Targum, and . . . the Marcan version rests on a misunderstanding of the Aramaic due mainly to the ambiguity of the particle **ܐ**. We may conjecture that what Jesus said was:

To you is given the secret of the Kingdom of God; but all things come in parables to those outside who

See indeed but do not know
 And hear indeed but do not understand
 Lest they should repent and receive forgiveness

where the last words would seem to mean: 'For if they did, they would repent and receive forgiveness,' . . . The passage will then be in complete agreement with what we learn elsewhere in the Synoptic Gospels about the nature and object of teaching in parables. It will be clear that the purpose of parables is not to harden the hearts of the hearers, but that it is the hardness of heart of the hearers that defeats the purpose of the parables."

⁴⁴Jeremias, op. cit., p. 11.

namely, "the mystery of its present 'breaking in' in Jesus' word and work."⁴⁵

The strength of this interpretation is apparent. In the first place, it does not postulate a radical misunderstanding between Jesus and Mark or between Jesus and the church. Second, it ascribes to the parables a dynamic role in the preaching of Jesus. Perhaps in a secondary way the parables did have the purpose of teasing the people into "active thought,"⁴⁶ of "attracting attention,"⁴⁷ of pointing out that there are "spiritual facts which underlie all processes of nature [and] all institutions of human society,"⁴⁸ or of "convincing even the reluctant will of its truth."⁴⁹ But all of these purposes are minor when compared to the primary intent of the parables--to open men's minds to the person and message of Jesus.

At this point we have concluded the general matters of introduction which must precede an exegetical study of the parables. This opens the way for us to concentrate

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 12.

⁴⁶Dodd, op. cit., p. 16.

⁴⁷Taylor, op. cit., p. 7.

⁴⁸Richard Chenevix Trench, Notes on the Parables of Our Lord (seventh revised edition; New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1855), p. 22.

⁴⁹Siegfried Goebel, The Parables of Jesus: A Methodological Exposition, in Clark's Foreign Theological Library (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1883), XV, 15.

specifically on the chosen parables of the Talents and the Pounds. In line with this, we shall first consider the Gospel context of each parable, then the immediate context of each parable, after which we shall relate the two parables to each other.

CHAPTER III

A REVIEW OF THE CONTEXTS OF THE PARABLES OF THE TALENTS AND THE POUNDS

A. The Gospel Context of the Parable of the Talents

The parable of the Talents is found in the Gospel according to St. Matthew (25:14-30). Our first task toward understanding this parable is to gain an insight into the character of Matthew's Gospel as a whole. This has been most excellently provided for us by H. Waetjen in his unpublished doctor's thesis on the Transformation of Judaism According to St. Matthew.¹ In the following paragraphs we shall draw liberally from his work.

According to Waetjen, an analysis of Matthew's structure reveals that this Gospel presents "the theology of a realized eschaton."² It is a "gospel of the Kingdom that has come, the Kingdom that is here and now."³

Working with this theme, Waetjen demonstrates how the total pattern of Matthew's Gospel develops this one central thought. He points out that in the first chapters of the

¹Herman C. Waetjen, "The Transformation of Judaism According to St. Matthew" (unpublished doctor's thesis; Eberhard-Karls-Universität, Tübingen, 1958).

²Ibid., p. 153.

³Ibid., p. 154.

Gospel and in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew pictures Jesus as "Moses redivivus," the fulfillment of Deut. 18:15.⁴

For like Moses, Jesus was called to deliver God's people. Like Moses he was persecuted as a baby by an evil regent. He came out of Egypt. He performed wonders. . . . But most important of all, like Moses he handed down the Torah.⁵

But all of this, says Waetjen once more, "could signify only one thing: the eschaton had arrived, the Last Times, when Israel's great Exodus would take place, had been inaugurated. . . ."6

The next section in Matthew deals with the chapters on miracles. Waetjen interprets them as follows:

To support this proclamation of the inauguration of the Kingdom, to make the arrival of the new Age a visible reality to those who are being evangelized, Jesus performs miracles. . . . concrete signs of the divine restoration. . . .⁷

The miracle chapters, in turn, are followed by the sending out of the disciples. Waetjen points up the meaning of this as follows:

To achieve the widest circulation of the good news of the Kingdom and to give the broadest demonstration of its reality by outward signs, Jesus dispatches His disciples, twelve of them, on a propaganda mission, endowing them with the to heal all maladies and to cast out demons.⁸

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., pp. 173f.

⁸Ibid., p. 174.

The climax of this total development, however, is the passion. Waetjen explains this as follows:

The climax of the whole eschatological drama, which Matthew is setting forth, is achieved in the passion of Jesus and in His subsequent resurrection from the dead. As in the preceding narratives of the life, words and deeds of Jesus, reference to the prophetic doctrine of the Last Times is both implicit and explicit, but here it becomes a conclusive demonstration of the actual and ultimate realization of God's Heil in the course of history. At long last the salvation which Israel and all the tribes of the earth yearned for, the salvation which was gradually unfolded in the course of history, is a present reality. And its reality is contained and culminated in this one person, Jesus the Messiah, the Son of Man.⁹

But in the passion, contends Waetjen,

dimensions have been enlarged, for He is no longer merely the personification of the saved remnant. His role has been extended to the proportions of the saving remnant. And as the Saving Remnant and the Suffering Servant, He identifies Himself with the Israel after the flesh, the Israel that must be judged, purified, tried by fire, if the new Israel is to be born, if God's new covenant is to be established and if God is to find that long-awaited Kingdom, which is cosmic in scope and is ruled directly and immediately by Himself.

.....

In this way, then, the great and final exodus is achieved. At the death of Jesus divine judgment falls upon Israel, of which He Himself is the embodiment. At the same time the veil of the temple is rent, and Jahweh comes forth to crush the enemies of Israel, to destroy the power of the hosts of evil. Thus, at long last the eschaton has come. . . . However, it does not only mean an end; that is, the end of "This Age" and its domination by the forces of evil. The eschaton also signifies a beginning; it is the inauguration of the restoration of the Age to Come. And this is validated by the appearance of the "holy ones" in Jerusalem . . . [who bear]

⁹Ibid., p. 175.

witness to the singular victory of the Lord, and by "Christ Himself" in his resurrection. . . . For even as He once came out of the waters of the Jordan in baptism, so He now arises out of the deep waters of death, which had unsuccessfully attempted to engulf Him.¹⁰

According to Waetjen, then, the remarkable unity which pervades Matthew's Gospel is its eschatological character. Assuming that this analysis is correct, it is relevant to inquire how the parable of the Talents fits into this theological framework. To do this we now move on to examine the parable's immediate context.

B. The Immediate Context of the Parable of the Talents

The parable of the Talents is located in the immediate context of Matthew 24-25. A survey of these chapters reveals that they deal specifically with eschatology, but that the tense is future rather than present. The following is a brief outline of these chapters.

1. Matthew 24-25 present a discourse of Jesus directed to the disciples. They are on the Mount of Olives (Matthew 24:3), and what Jesus says comes as a reply to the following question placed by the twelve: "Tell us, when will this be [the destruction of the temple (Matthew 24:2)], and what will be the sign of your coming and the close of the age?" (Matthew 24:3).

¹⁰Ibid., p. 176ff.

2. In answer to this question, Jesus recounts the various signs which will forecast the end. He mentions the following: there will be the coming of the Antichrist (Matthew 24:5); there will be wars and rumors of wars (Matthew 24:6ff.); there will be suffering, apostacy, and the deceit of false prophets (Matthew 24:9ff.); there will be the appearance of the abomination of desolation, the flight of Christians, the untimely shortening of the age, and the deceit of false prophecy (Matthew 24:15ff.); finally, there will also be the signs of the heavens, the sign of the fig tree, and the comparison of the last days with the days of Noah (Matthew 24:29ff.).

3. Once Jesus has recounted the signs, he underscores this teaching by admonishing the disciples to be watchful and faithful. He does this by narrating a series of parables as follows: (a) even as the householder who expects a thief is watchful, so the disciples "must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Matthew 24:42ff.); (b) or even as the slave is to be faithful and wise who is set over the master's household while he is away, so each disciple, too, is to be "faithful and wise," otherwise "the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will punish him" (Matthew 24:45ff.); (c) or, again, even as there were ten maidens who were waiting for the bridegroom but only five were wise enough to bring the

necessary oil which their lamps would require for the long watch, so the disciples are to be prepared and "watch . . . for you know neither the day nor the hour" (Matthew 25:1ff.); (d) or, finally, even as the first two slaves were diligent while their lord was away and were not as the third slave who did nothing, so the disciples are to be diligent in carrying out the tasks of their Lord as long as He is "away" (Matthew 25:14ff.).

4. As the conclusion to this discourse, Jesus presents a description of the end of the world and the Final Judgment of all nations, a judgment in which the "Son of Man" will separate the "righteous" from the "cursed" and will bless the former but punish the latter (Matthew 25:31ff.).

With this outline in mind, we may draw the following conclusions in regard to the nature of the parable of the Talents and its immediate context.

1. Matthew, as an eschatological Gospel, distinguishes between "realized eschatology" and "futurist eschatology."¹¹ Seen from Matthew's point of view, this means that though the "end" has come (since Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ and has ushered in the messianic age), yet the "end of the end" has not (for Jesus has not yet manifested himself before the nations as the King of Power and Judge of the

¹¹Ibid., p. 194. Cf. also C. H. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (revised edition; London: Nisbet & Co., 1950), pp. 53ff.

world). Matthew's Gospel, then, preaches a "now . . . but not yet."

2. But it is exactly this tension which explains the relationship of Matthew 24-25 with the rest of the Gospel. In the rest of the Gospel Matthew emphasizes primarily a realized eschatology. Here Matthew emphasizes primarily a futurist eschatology.

3. This, in turn, explains the relationship of the parable of the Talents both with regard to its immediate context and with regard to the Gospel as a whole. From the point of view of the total Gospel, the parable of the Talents is a futurist eschatological parable. Viewed in terms of its immediate context, the parable of the Talents admonishes the disciples to faithfulness in view of the Final Day of Judgment and the anticipated sudden return of the Son of Man.

C. The Gospel Context of the Parable of the Pounds

One of the most assured results of recent New Testament scholarship is that the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts form two halves of the same whole.¹² If this is true, then no attempt to understand the one can ignore the other.

¹²Ulrich Luck, "Kerygma, Tradition und Geschichte Jesu bei Lukas," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, LVII (Heft 1, 1960), 51f., makes the following statement: "Aber besonders der Zusammenhang des Evangeliums mit der Apostelgeschichte kann uns dazu helfen, den eigentlichen

The beginning of the book of Acts makes it clear that it is a record of the fulfillment of the angel's prophecy to the disciples--that they are to be the witnesses of Christ who will bring the Gospel message into "Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). In harmony with this, the opening chapter of Acts finds the disciples in Jerusalem, and the last chapter closes with Paul in Rome (Acts 28:16). So Acts records the history of the early church as it spreads the message of salvation.

Luke's Gospel, on the other hand, presents primarily the history of Jesus. The prologue of Luke and the beginning of Acts make this evident. Acts records this as follows: "in the first book [Luke's Gospel], O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up . . ." (Acts 1:1-2).

The Gospel, in turn, paraphrases the same thing as follows:

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having followed

theologischen Entwurf zu erfassen, in dem Lukas die Geschichte Jesu und die der ersten Kirche sieht.

.

Dabei ist zu beachten, dass sich schon das Vorwort des Evangeliums auf das ganze Werk bezieht, so dass eine sachgemäße Beurteilung des Evangeliums ohne die Apostelgeschichte ebenso unmöglich ist wie die der Apostelgeschichte ohne das Evangelium."

all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed. (Luke 1:1-4).

According to both of Luke's books, then, the Gospel he wrote is a history of Jesus even as the book of Acts is a history of the early church.¹³

The historical perspective of Luke's Gospel helps to explain Luke's concern to link Jesus' history with world history; also, why he designates specific times and even dates (Cf. Luke 1:15; 1:24ff.; 2:1ff.; 2:42; 3:1ff.; 3:23ff.; 7; 24:1). Regardless of how one finally schematizes Luke's theology, one thing is clear--the factor of time plays a central role in the ground plan of his work.

Whereas Matthew writes his Gospel from an eschatological point of view, Luke writes his Gospel from a historical point of view. This distinction, however, is by no means absolute. It intends only to point out a specific characteristic of each Gospel, not to assert that Matthew has little historical consciousness or that Luke has only a minor concern for eschatology.

At any rate, if Luke writes his Gospel from a historical

¹³In making this statement, we do not mean to say that Luke is concerned to present a chronological, biographical sketch of Jesus' life. That Luke's primary concern in writing his Gospel and even organizing his material was theological in nature is well established. Cf. Hans Conzelmann, Die Mitte der Zeit (dritte überarbeitete Auflage; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1960).

point of view, it is now necessary to determine how the parable of the Pounds relates itself to this perspective. To do this we turn to examine the parable's immediate context.

D. The Immediate Context of the Parable of the Pounds

The parable of the Pounds is located in the central section of Luke's Gospel which extends from Luke 9:51-19:27. In fact, it is the parable of the Pounds which closes this section. Between it and the following pericope (Jesus' entry into Jerusalem (Luke 19:28ff.)) there is a clear line of demarcation.

On the other hand, an examination of the context which precedes the parable shows that it has a close affinity to the Zacchaeus pericope which stands immediately before it (Luke 19:1ff.). This pericope, in turn, is clearly bordered off from its preceding context (Luke 18:35-43). Accordingly, the immediate context of the parable of the Pounds includes the parable itself and the story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-27).

The key for understanding this section seems to lie in the last two verses of the Zacchaeus story (Luke 19:9-10), together with the introductory verse of the parable (Luke 19:11). These passages read as follows:

And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house [referring to Zacchaeus' conversion], since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

.

As they heard these things, he [Jesus] proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.

According to these verses, the immediate context of the parable of the Pounds sets up the following situation: the location is the house of Zacchaeus or the immediate environs (Luke 19:9), and the circumstances are Jesus' nearness to Jerusalem, which is the goal of the long journey he undertook already with Luke 9:51, together with the saving nature of his ministry, which led the people to believe that he was about to inaugurate the visible kingdom of God in the capital city. In view of this situation, Jesus speaks the parable of the Pounds, one purpose of which is to correct the false notions which the people harbored about the kingdom of God (Luke 19:11).

This analysis makes it apparent that the concept of the kingdom of God occupies a central position in the immediate context of the parable of the Pounds. To determine the relationship of this section to the total Gospel, therefore, it is necessary to determine what Luke means when he uses this phrase, the kingdom of God.

In Luke's theology, the coming of the kingdom of God is something which occurs only at the end of the ages when the Son of Man appears "in a cloud with power and great glory" (Luke 21:27), when

there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon earth distress of nations in perplexity . . . men fainting with fear and with foreboding of what

is coming on the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken (Luke 21:25-26).

It is then, and only then, says St. Luke, "when you see these things taking place, [that] you know that the kingdom of God is near" (Luke 21:31).

Thus, for Luke the breaking in of the kingdom of God is an eschatological event, and it takes place when "heaven and earth will pass away" (Luke 21:33). This is the reason why in Luke's Gospel Jesus never preaches that "the kingdom of God is at hand," as he does in Mark (1:15) and Matthew (5:17). For in Luke's perspective the kingdom of God as such comes with the Second Coming of Christ and not with Jesus' earthly ministry.¹⁴

But this is not to be understood in the sense that Luke represents a totally "different" theology from that of the other evangelists. It does mean, however, that he represents a different perspective. That his theology corresponds generally with the other synoptics is proven from the fact that Luke, as well as the other evangelists, sees a new aeon ushered in with the life and death of Jesus. The difference, however, is that whereas the others prefer to designate this new aeon as the "kingdom of God," Luke restricts this phrase to refer to the Second Coming alone.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 113.

For our purposes the foregoing is important for drawing the following conclusions concerning the relationship of the parable of the Pounds to its immediate context and to the Gospel of Luke as a whole.

1. Luke writes his Gospel from an historical perspective, not an eschatological perspective. This means that eschatology is but one phase of Luke's theology; it does not summarize his entire Gospel, as it does the Gospel of Matthew. According to Luke, eschatology deals with the Final Judgment and the Second Coming of Christ.¹⁵

2. The immediate context of the parable of the Pounds concerns itself with eschatology. The relationship of the immediate context to Luke's entire Gospel is the relationship between Luke's theology as a whole and one of its particular doctrines. Or, seen within Luke's historical perspective, this relationship is that which exists between an age (new age ushered in with Jesus) and the end of the ages (Jesus' Second Coming).

3. The relationship of the parable of the Pounds to Luke's total Gospel, then, is that it is an eschatological parable--it asserts that the coming of the kingdom of God occurs at the end of the ages. In relation to its immediate context, the parable of the Pounds asserts that though

¹⁵Ibid.

Jesus is near to Jerusalem and the people see the effects of his saving ministry (Luke 19:9,10), nevertheless this does not mean that he will inaugurate a visible state to be ruled by God. Much more than looking for a visible state, this parable calls Christians to use the present time to prove themselves faithful in the tasks of the Lord.

E. The Relationship between the Gospels of Matthew and Luke in Terms of the Parables of the Talents and the Pounds

Thus far we have established that Matthew's Gospel is eschatologically oriented and constructed in terms of a tension between realized and futurist eschatology. On the one hand, Matthew claims that the end has already come with the person and work of Jesus, the Messiah. On the other hand, he also states that the end of the end, i.e. the absolute, visible manifestation of what has already occurred, is still to be realized in the Second Coming of Christ. So Matthew defines eschatology in a narrower and wider sense.

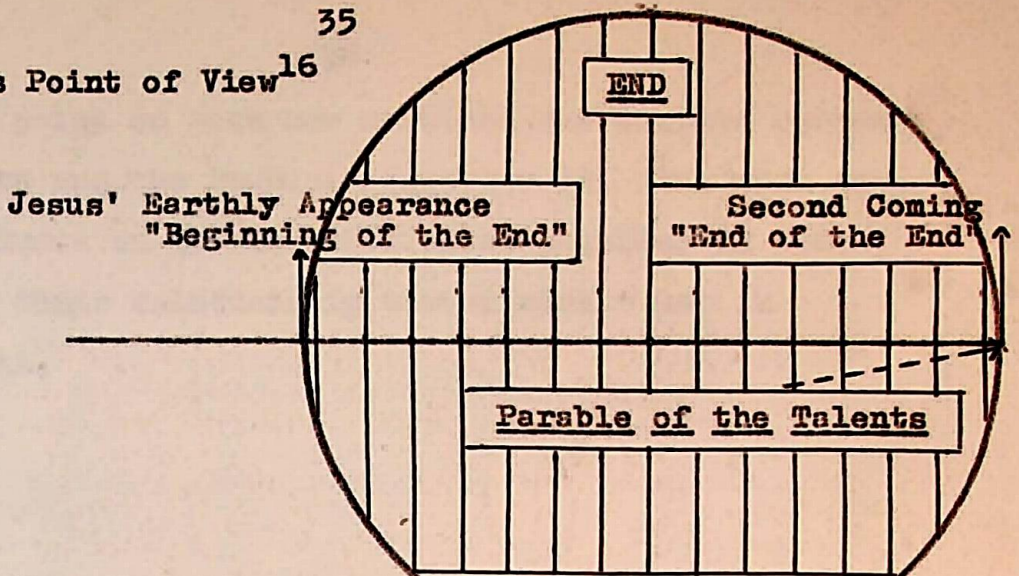
Luke, on the other hand, while also understanding that a new age has dawned in the earthly appearance of Jesus Christ, does not define this as the end. For him the end first comes with the Second Coming of Christ. So for Luke eschatology is defined in the narrower sense only. What Matthew calls the end of the end, Luke calls merely the end.

But in regard to the parables of the Talents and the Pounds specifically, each evangelist applies his particular parable to the same point of time. For in Matthew the

parable of the Talents is a futurist eschatological parable, and in Luke the parable of the Pounds is an eschatological parable. But futurist eschatology in Matthew refers to the Second Coming of Christ, even as all eschatology in Luke. The relationship between Matthew and Luke in terms of the parables of the Talents and the Pounds, then, is that each one understands his particular parable in terms of the Final End and the Second Coming of Christ. These Gospels display a different orientation, therefore, but at the point of these two parables both evangelists stand at the same place.

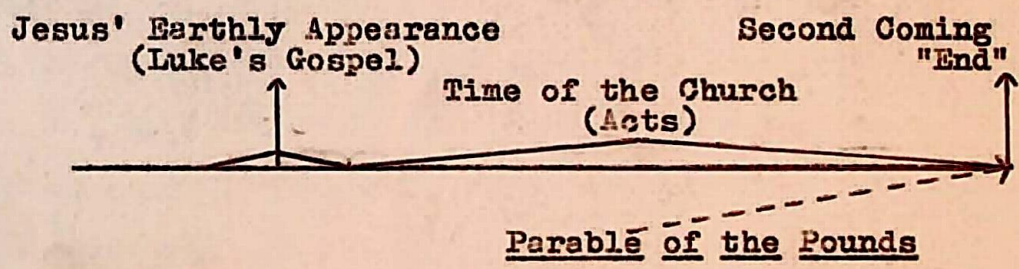
Perhaps this similarity of view despite a difference in orientation can be demonstrated with the following graphs.

1. Matthew's Point of View¹⁶



The birth of Jesus ushers in the end. Time is eschatologically viewed as a point. From now on history unfolds within this point--the end is here but within the end we can distinguish between a beginning of the end and an end of the end. The parable of the Talents refers to the end of the end--the Second Coming of Christ.

2. Luke's Point of View¹⁷



The birth of Jesus ushers in a new age. But this new age is not the end. History unfolds much more in terms of a line rather than within a point, so that the end refers to the final return of the Savior. The parable of the Pounds refers to the end--the Second Coming of Christ.

¹⁶If our investigation of Matthew's Gospel is correct, then Oscar Gullmann, Christus und die Zeit (zweite Auflage; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1957), p. 71, has correctly captured Luke's historical perspective but has completely misunderstood Matthew's eschatological point of view. Gullmann postulates the "line" as the time perspective for all of the evangelists, indeed, for the entire Scriptures.

¹⁷Ibid.

At this point we have now examined the various contexts of the Talents and the Pounds, respectively. Our next task is to concentrate on the texts of these parables in order to determine their relationship toward each other in greater detail.

CHAPTER IV

THE DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE PARABLES OF THE TALENTS AND THE POUNDS

A. The Translation of These Parables

1. The Translation of the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30)

"For it is just as when a man, about to go on a journey, called his slaves and entrusted his property to them. (15) To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and he went away. (16) Immediately the one who received the five talents went and traded with them, and he made an additional five. (17) So also he who had the two talents made an additional two. (18) But the one who received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground, and he hid his master's money. (19) After a long time, the master of those slaves returned, and he settled accounts with them. (20) He who had received the five talents stepped forward, presented the additional five talents, and said, 'Lord, you entrusted me with five talents; here, I have made five additional talents.' (21) His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave! You were faithful in managing a few things, I shall put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your lord!'

(22) Also he who had the two talents stepped forward and said, 'Lord, you entrusted me with two talents; here, I have made two additional talents.' (23) His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave! You were faithful in managing a few things, I shall put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your lord!'

(24) And he who had received the one talent likewise stepped forward and said, 'I knew you to be a hard man, lord, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not winnow. (25) And because I was afraid, I went off and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.' (26) But his master answered him in reply, 'Wicked and slothful slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not winnow? (27) Then you should have taken my money and given it to the bankers, and when I came, I would have received that amount (what was mine) with interest. (28) Therefore, take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. (29) For to every one who has shall more be given, and he shall have a great abundance. But from him who has not, even that which he has shall be taken away. (30) And throw the worthless slave into the darkness outside; there one finds (there shall be) weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

2. The Translation of the Parable of the Pounds
(Luke 19:11-27)

And as they heard these things, he went on and told them a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem and they supposed that the kingdom of God was about to appear immediately. (12) He said, therefore, "A nobleman was about to go to a distant country in order to obtain royal power for himself and then return. (13) And he called ten of his slaves and he gave them ten minas and said to them, 'Do business with these until I return.' (14) But his countrymen hated him, and they sent a delegation after him who said, 'We do not want this man to rule over us.' (15) And it happened, after he returned, having received the royal power, that he ordered these slaves, to whom he had given the money, to be called in in order that he might know what each had gained by trading. (16) The first one came forward and said, 'Lord, your mina has earned ten more minas.' (17) He said to him, 'Well done, good slave! Because you were trustworthy in a very little thing, you shall have authority over ten cities.' (18) The second one came and said, 'Your mina, lord, has made five minas.' (19) He said also to him, 'And you shall be over five cities.' (20) Then the other one came and said, 'Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a napkin. (21) For I feared you, because you are a severe man, withdrawing what you did not deposit, and reaping what you did not sow.' (22) He said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I

will convict you, wicked slave. You knew that I am a severe man, withdrawing what I did not deposit, and reaping what I did not sow? (23) Then why didn't you give my money to the bank, and when I came I could have collected it with interest?' (24) And he said to those who were standing by, 'Take the mina from him and give it to him who has the ten minas.' (25) (But they said to him, 'Lord, he has ten minas!') (26) 'I say to you, that to everyone who has shall more be given, but from him who has not, even what he has shall be taken away. (27) But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to rule over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.'"

B. A Preliminary Comparison of the Texts of These Parables

A preliminary comparison of the texts of the parables of the Talents and the Pounds produces the following results:

1. In a word for word comparison Matthew and Luke agree with each other in forty-eight instances exactly (approximately 20 per cent of the text), and in eleven other instances they use the same word but place it in a different conjugation or declension, as the case may be. In addition, there are frequent instances where the words, though not the same, are nevertheless synonymous, namely

ἀποδοῦν (Matthew 25:14) in place of *ἐπορεύθης*
εἰς χεῖραν μακρὰν (Luke 19:12), or *εἶπεν*
 (Matthew 25:22,24) in preference to *λέγων* (Luke 19:13,20),

etc. On the basis of vocabulary alone, therefore, the two parables give evidence of a certain common fundament.

2. In terms of shared characteristics, both parables develop the following story:

- a. There is a master or lord of wealth,
- b. who takes a long journey,
- c. who entrusts a portion of his wealth to several of his slaves,
- d. who expects that they make good use of their trust,
- e. who returns and calls these slaves (three) to account,
- f. who commends and rewards the first two slaves because they have increased the trust they had received,
- g. who condemns the third slave for being unfaithful, since, despite the fact that he had preserved what had been given to him and was prepared to return it exactly as he had received it, nevertheless his unwillingness to work for the lord revealed his guilt,
- h. who takes that which was entrusted to the third slave and gives it to the first of the former two slaves,
- i. who deprives the third slave of fellowship with him by giving him no reward.

3. In terms of differences, these two parables reflect the following:

Matthew

Luke

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The lord is a wealthy business man (Mt. 25:14) b. three slaves receive the trust (Mt. 25:15). | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The lord is a nobleman or prince (Lu. 19:12). b. ten slaves receive the trust (Lu. 19:13). |
|---|--|

- | | |
|--|---|
| c. the trust is in talents (Mt. 25:15). | c. the trust is in minas (Lu. 19:13). |
| d. the talents are distributed by 5, 2, and 1, respectively (Mt. 25:15) | d. the minas are distributed so that each slave receives but one (Lu. 19:13). |
| e. the first two slaves increase their charge by 100 per cent each (Mt. 25:20,22). | e. the first two slaves increase their charge by 1000 per cent and 500 per cent respectively (Lu. 19:16,18). |
| f. the lord sets the first two slaves over much, but each receives the same reward (Mt. 25:21,23). | f. the lord rewards the first slave with rule over ten cities and the second slave with rule over five cities (Lu. 19:17,19). |
| g. the third slave preserved his money by hiding it in a hole in the ground (Mt. 25:18,25). | g. the third slave preserved his money by hiding it in a napkin (Lu. 19:20). |
| h. the third slave is thrown into the darkness outside (Mt. 25:30). | h. the third slave loses his charge, but it is not explicitly said that he suffers further punishment (Lu. 19:24ff.). |
| i. both of the worthy slaves share in the joy of their lord (Mt. 25:21,23). | i. there is a prince who wants a crown, but his countrymen hate him and send a delegation to thwart his attempt for the throne (Lu. 19:13f.). |
| | j. the prince is successful in gaining the crown, however, and when he returns home he slays all the citizens who hated him and had opposed him (Lu. 19:15,27). |

In terms of the preceding similarities and differences between the parables of the Talents and the Pounds, we may draw the following conclusions:

1. Though there are many minor differences between the parables of the Talents and the Pounds, it does not alter the fact that there is a basic story, completely sufficient in itself, which underlies these two parables. This story deals with the lord who goes on a long journey, entrusts his wealth to his trusted slaves, and then returns to call them to account. The climax of this story, as well as its moral, lay in the dealings of the lord with the third slave.¹

2. At the same time Luke's version presents a second, independent story, which has been subordinated to the first. This is the story of the prince who appeals for the right to rule over the land in which he lives, who is opposed by the citizens who hate him, but who is successful in his efforts, returns as king, and slays his enemies. While the parable of the Talents presents a variation of merely the one story, Luke's version is a combination of two stories fused into one.²

3. These similarities and differences between the parables of the Talents and the Pounds are most probably to be traced to Jesus himself. The most plausible explanation

¹C. H. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (revised edition; London: Nisbet & Co., 1950), pp. 149f.

²Joachim Jeremias, Die Gleichnisse Jesu (fünfte Auflage; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958), pp. 50f. Hereafter this work is referred to as Jeremias, Gleichnisse.

is that Jesus used the same basic story on two different occasions, changing it and adapting it to suit his own purposes. It does not seem likely to us that Jesus spoke but one parable and that subsequent redaction is to explain the wide variations.³ We base this conclusion on the following arguments:

a. J. Jeremias, in examining the various sources of Gospel parable material, comes to the conclusion that the redaction of these two parables, which is almost totally of an allegorical nature, must have taken place before the time of Matthew and Luke.⁴ Accordingly, we see in this argument at least the possibility that the variations could stem from Jesus himself.

b. Furthermore, H. Riesenfeld argues quite forcefully that the Jewish heritage of the early Christian church was such that the preservation of early Christian tradition, especially the logia of Jesus, must be considered in terms of the methods of transmission which the Jews used in the preservation of their tradition of the Elders.⁵ If this is

³Our conclusion is shared by Franz M. Moschner, The Kingdom of Heaven in Parables, translated by David Heimann; (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1960), pp. 165f.

⁴Jeremias, Gleichnisse, p. 56.

⁵Harald Riesenfeld, The Gospel Tradition and its Beginnings (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1957), pp. 16ff.

the case, then it is out of the question that the words of Jesus were heavily redacted between the time in which Jesus spoke them and the time in which the evangelists reproduced them.

From the point of view of the time span alone, therefore, it would be difficult to postulate that kind of redaction on a single parable of Jesus which could explain the wide variations we now have. For if Matthew and Luke are not responsible for these wide differences, as Jeremias asserts,⁶ then we move considerably closer to the time of Jesus. But this means that the original parable must have undergone major redaction within a very short period of time. But again, Riesenfeld has shown that it is out of harmony with the character of the early church to postulate such heavy redaction⁷--even more so within a very short period of time.

These considerations lead us to the conclusion which we have already stated above--that Jesus used the same original story on two separate occasions, adapting it each time to serve his own purposes. The strength of this conclusion is that it does full justice both to the similarities and differences which these parables reveal, as well as to what seems to have been the case in regard to the

⁶Supra, p. 44.

⁷Supra, p. 44.

transmission of the early church's oral tradition.

A preliminary comparison of the parables of the Talents and the Pounds, then, reveals that these parables are basically related to each other in that the same original story lies at the foundation of both.⁸ The major difference between them is that Luke's account presents us with a fusion of the original story with a second story. This difference, as well as the many minor variations, suggests that Jesus adapted the original story on two different occasions to suit his own purposes.

At this point we are now prepared to move into the detailed exegesis of the parables of the Talents and the Pounds. Our method will be the following: as a matter of procedure, we shall deal with the texts verse by verse and comment on what we consider to be the pertinent words or phrases; as a matter of interpretation, we shall attempt to distinguish between those remarks which pertain to the story of the parable as such, and those which pertain to its "allegorical" (in the sense of theological) interpretation.

⁸This conclusion is also shared by B. T. D. Smith, The Parables of the Synoptic Gospels (Cambridge: The University Press, 1937), p. 162.

C. The Exegesis of These Parables

1. The Exegesis of the Parable of the Talents
(Matthew 25:14-30)

v. 14.

ἡ ἀποστολή ---This phrase indicates the close relationship between the parable of the Talents and the preceding parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. Hence, the discourse on the talents is also to be viewed as a parable of the "kingdom of the heavens" (Matthew 25:1). The translators of the King James Version⁹ actually included this latter phrase in the English text of v. 14, though it fails completely in the Greek.

ὁ βασιλεὺς ---In regard both to the story of the parable and its allegorical interpretation the commentators disagree as to the identification of the "man." Within the framework of the parable, G. Morgan believes that he was a king.¹⁰ But Morgan seems to be influenced both by Matthew's following description of the Last Judgment (Matthew 25:34), as well as by Luke's parallel version of the parable of the Pounds (Luke 19:12). The most natural interpretation would seem to be the common one--that here

⁹Holy Bible, King James Version, Matthew 25:14. Hereafter this work is referred to as KJV.

¹⁰G. Campbell Morgan, The Parables and Metaphors of Our Lord (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1943), p. 153. Hereafter this work is referred to as Morgan, Parables.

we are dealing with a businessman of some means.¹¹

Allegorically, H. Major¹² and A. M'Neile¹³ maintain the following hypothesis: they hold that this man is God, and that the slaves refer to Jews rather than to the disciples or to Christians. This would seem to be valid if Major and M'Neile are thinking of the original story which lies behind this parable somewhat as we have outlined it above.¹⁴ For the original story could well stem from Jewish tradition, and in that case the man would be Jahweh, the slaves would be the children of Israel, and the point of the story would be that "those who are faithful, and ready for the day of reckoning, are those who prove diligent in the fulfillment of life's duties."¹⁵

In Matthew's opinion, however, the man certainly refers to Jesus. For even as this man takes a journey, entrusts his wealth to his servants, and then returns to prove them in terms of their faithfulness and diligence to their tasks, so Jesus ascends into heaven, entrusts his Word and work to

¹¹Jeremias, Gleichnisse, p. 50.

¹²H. D. A. Major, T. W. Manson and C. J. Wright, The Mission and Message of Jesus (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1938), p. 538. In the body of the paper this work is referred to only under the name of Major.

¹³Alan Hugh M'Neile, The Gospel According to St. Matthew (London: Macmillan & Co., 1949), p. 363.

¹⁴Supra, pp. 33f.

¹⁵M'Neile, loc. cit.

Christians (the church), and will return one day to prove them in terms of their faithfulness and diligence in fulfilling their tasks (Cf. Matthew 25:31-46). Furthermore, the very context of the Talents demands this interpretation.¹⁶

δούλους---Textually, this word is to be rendered as "slave" in favor of the weaker "servant" (Revised Standard Version).¹⁷

The behavior of both master and slaves as depicted in the parable reflects the practices of Jewish slavery remarkably well. As an institution, slavery seems to have been well established in Palestine at the time of Jesus.¹⁸ There were slaves of both Jewish and Gentile origin, though the number of the former was quite small.¹⁹ Definite distinctions, however, were made between the two races in regard to the privileges or "rights" they enjoyed. The most basic distinction was that the Jewish slave could regain his freedom after not more than six years of service, while the Gentile slave remained in bondage for life.²⁰

¹⁶Supra, pp. 11f.

¹⁷Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version, Matthew 25:14. Hereafter this work is referred to as RSV.

¹⁸Joachim Jeremias, Jerusalem zur Zeit Jesu (zweite Auflage; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958), p. 218. Hereafter this work is referred to as Jeremias, Jerusalem.

¹⁹Jeremias, Jerusalem, pp. 184, 217.

²⁰Jeremias, Jerusalem, pp. 184-188, 217-224.

In fact, the Jewish slave was hardly considered less than a "hired-worker."²¹

According to the customs, slaves could be acquired in the following ways: (a) from war; (b) by purchase; (c) by birth, if the mother were already a slave; (d) as payment for a debt; (e) by voluntary sale of self or daughter; (f) and by court action, especially in the case of thievery.²²

The familiar classes of Jewish domestics, other than that of the concubine, seem to have been three, namely the steward, the household servant, and the field-servant.²³

The number of the first two classes was large, but that of the third negligible, since in Palestine hired hands usually worked in the fields.²⁴

In regard to the treatment of slaves, the cruelty one meets in Greek and Roman circles does not seem to have been the case in Jewish practice.²⁵ In fact, slaves in Judaism may even be said to have enjoyed "a general spirit

²¹Jeremias, Jerusalem, p. 137.

²²Jeremias, Jerusalem, pp. 184-188, 217-224.

²³Jeremias, Jerusalem, p. 218.

²⁴James Hastings, editor, A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917), II, 641.

²⁵Ibid.

of kindness" and contentment.²⁶

The life of the Jewish home is represented as united and happy, master and slave partaking of the same food, exchanging words of respect and tenderness, and mourning over the separation effected by death.²⁷

Discipline of course was exercised, and while the master could legally imprison or punish a slave, yet the power of life and death, as well as that of maiming the person, was not lawfully granted to him.²⁸

Under the force of Pharisaism Jewish slaves also came to share in the religious life of the master. The following describes this:

They [the slaves] shared the family worship, and in regard to obligations were classed with the women and children as bound to observe all religious ritual in the home, except the repetition of the Shema and the wearing of phylacteries. Laws of an earlier date required the circumcision of slaves (Gn. 17:12) and their participation in feast and sacrifice (Dt. 12:13; 16:11). Such regulations could not have fallen into desuetude without involving the ceremonial pollution from which it was one of the first objects of the legalists of the first century to escape. The knitting together of master and slaves in religious bonds supplied a strong motive for kindness and forbearance.²⁹

In view of the foregoing, it is not at all surprising that Matthew should speak of a rich man making a journey and entrusting the management of his wealth to his slaves.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid., p. 642.

²⁸Ibid., p. 641.

²⁹Ibid., p. 642.

The slaves could have been artisans and on that account would already be familiar with the affairs of business. Of this, however, we cannot be certain. But we are safe in judging these slaves as intimate attendants of the master who, in managing his wealth, were in a free position to enter into trade or to take advantage of the money-lending systems to which our text refers (Matthew 25:27).

Allegorically, the *δοῦλοι* refer to all Christians.³⁰ Matthew doubtlessly understood them as such, since he records that Jesus spoke this parable to the disciples (Matthew 24:1), and the disciples, according to his theology, represent the new Israel whom Jesus called and to whom he delivered the new Torah (Matthew 4:18ff.; 5:1ff.).

τὰ ὑπάρχοντα --In terms of the parable, H. Swete defines the meaning of this term correctly when he states, "not, of course, his lands and hereditaments, but all the loose cash and regular income of the estate."³¹ The master, then, divided his working capital among the slaves.

ἔδωκεν --H. Strack and P. Billerbeck in connection with their comments on this parable outline the Jewish legal

³⁰William M. Taylor, Parables of Our Savior (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1886), p. 183.

³¹Henry Barclay Swete, The Parables of the Kingdom (London: Macmillan & Co., 1921), p. 139.

stipulations involved when one individual entrusted another with his money. They are the following:

Ein Banker darf Gelder, die ihm als offenes Depositum übergeben sind, in seinem Interesse geschäftlich ausnützen; für Verluste muss er eintreten. . . . Einer, der nicht berufsmässiger Bankier ist, darf ihm anvertraute Gelder unter keinen Umständen verwerten; . . . [und] er kann regresspflichtig gemacht werden nur, falls er es an der nötigen Vorsicht bei ihrer Aufbewahrung hat fehlen lassen. Anders ein Sklave: er ist wie sein Herr; er darf deshalb von seinem Herrn ihm übergebene Gelder nutzbringend verwenden; jedoch gehört der erzielte Gewinn seinem Herrn; denn alles, was der Sklave erwirbt, erwirbt er für seinen Herrn.

.
[Aber] ein Sklave, der ein eingeborener Jude war-- der sogenannte "hebräische" Sklave-- . . . konnte auch für sich Vermögen erwerben.³²

In line with these regulations the slaves of our story were completely free to act with the master's wealth however they saw fit. And should they have desired to deliver it to the bank and collect interest, they could have done this with a perfect guarantee against loss.

τάλαντα --The question of the precise value of a talent is not at once clear, since the worth could vary in respect to the times, the metal used (gold, silver, copper), or the place (Aegina, Attica, Syria).³³ Of the three

³²Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, Das Evangelium nach Matthäus, in Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash (zweite unveränderte Auflage; München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1956), I, 970f. Hereafter this work is referred to as Strack-Billerbeck, Matthäus.

³³William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 811.

metals, it does not seem likely that these talents were either of copper or gold, since the former was not especially common, and the latter carried a value of around \$30,000.³⁴ The choice, then, falls to the silver talent, and this is reenforced by v. 13, where Matthew refers to the money which the slaves received as *τὸ ἀργύριον*.

Of the various silver talents, that of Aegina was worth approximately \$1,625, that of Attica \$1,030, and that of Syria \$250.³⁵ Most of the commentators prefer the Attic talent, and for general purposes they reckon it at \$1,000.³⁶ Accordingly, the first slave received approximately \$5,000, the second slave \$2,000, and the third slave \$1,000.

Commentators who incline to allegorical explanations expend a great deal of effort in order to determine possible theological interpretations for the talents. One scholar views them as human abilities or endowments in

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Goodspeed Parallel New Testament, translated from the Greek by Edgar J. Goodspeed (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1943), p. 62. Hereafter this work is referred to as Goodspeed, N.T. Cf. also Edwin W. Rice, Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew (fifth revised edition; Philadelphia: The Union Press, 1900), p. 253.

general,³⁷ another as the Word of God,³⁸ another as specific "powers conferred for the discharge of duties connected with official trust,"³⁹ another as any opportunities for faithful service,⁴⁰ and still another as the special gifts of the Holy Spirit.⁴¹ While the one or the other of these suggestions may be fruitful homiletically, objective criteria are lacking to establish any of these interpretations. For our purposes it is not so important to attempt to determine what the talents imply as to note that they were given to the slaves as a trust and not as a possession.

Another question regarding the talents is Matthew's choice of this amount in view of Luke's preference for the minas. Jeremias speaks for the majority of the commentators when he holds that Luke's version is original while Matthew's shows evidence of the first evangelist's

³⁷ Alfred Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew (London: Robert Scott, 1911), p. 347. Hereafter this work is referred to as Plummer, Matthew.

³⁸ Siegfried Goebel, The Parables of Jesus: A Methodical Exposition, in Clark's Foreign Theological Library (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1883), XV, 422.

³⁹ Thomas Richey, The Parables of the Lord Jesus (New York: E. & J. B. Young & Co., 1888), p. 387.

⁴⁰ D. T. K. Drummond, The Parabolic Teaching of Christ; or, The Engravings of the New Testament (New York: Robert Cartet & Bros., 1861), p. 423.

⁴¹ Swete, op. cit., p. 140.

own redactionary efforts.⁴² On the other hand, A. Jülicher argues, first, that earning bank interest on money (Matthew 25:27) makes sense only when the principle is large enough; second, that in the third version of this story (Gospel of the Hebrews) we find the talents once again preferred; and third, that Matthew's larger sum tends to indicate the greatness of God's Grace.⁴³

In the last analysis it would seem futile to force a decision between the talents and the minas. Rather, the most logical thing to do is to accept each text as it stands, especially since those who argue for the minas as opposed to the talents appear to do so out of the set presupposition that a sober text is more authentic than an embellished text; therefore, the smaller amount is the more original reading.⁴⁴ This need not be the case.

πέντε ... δύο ... ἐν ... κατὰ τὴν ἰσχύαν
 δύναμιν --The distribution of the talents is not proportional. This is important for the theme of the story, since it indicates that faithfulness, not the sheer amount of return, is the point at issue. For the man who received two talents is essentially confronted with the

⁴²Jeremias, Gleichnisse, p. 52.

⁴³Adolf Jülicher, Die Gleichnisreden Jesu (zweite Auflage; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1899), II, 494.

⁴⁴Jeremias, Gleichnisse, pp. 20ff.

same situation as he who received but one, since both began with little. Yet, because the second slave was diligent (he doubled his trust), he received just as great a reward as the first slave (who also did no more than double his trust), though the latter had earned the greater number of talents (five talents as compared to two talents) (Matthew 25:21,23). Thus, the second slave becomes a key figure in this parable. By beginning with little but proving great diligence, he robs the third slave of any possible excuse for failing to employ what his lord had entrusted to him on the basis that he lacked ability or that his charge was negligible. In contrast to the first slave, the second slave shows that the sheer amount one earns does not determine the master's favor. Again, diligence is the key concern.

v. 15.

²ἀπεδύμηνεν--Allegorically, the departure of the master would find its correspondence in Jesus' Ascension. He is now "gone," and they are to carry out the task he has assigned (Matthew 28:19f.).

ἐνθίως --Textually, the problem with ἐνθίως is whether it modifies ἀπεδύμηνεν, in which case it closes the preceding sentence, or παρενθίως, in which case it stands at the head of a new sentence. As far as the manuscripts are concerned, the main traditions seem to be rather well divided. Other considerations, however, lead us to favor the latter view--that ἐνθίως modifies παρενθίως

In the first place, if usage is any criterion for determining position, then a mere glance at Moulton-Geden indicates that *ἐνθίς* overwhelmingly prefers to be stationed at the head of the clause or sentence in which it stands.⁴⁵ Second, against S. Goebel⁴⁶ and H. Meyer,⁴⁷ it seems to us that the force of action which this word carries is dissipated when one uses it merely to hasten the master's intended departure. On the other hand, as A. Bruce points out, *ἐνθίς* at the head of the following sentence becomes decisive in describing the temperament of the first slave--it indicates that he set out "at once" to do the will of the master.⁴⁸ In this position *ἐνθίς* helps to mold the decisive pattern of the total parable, namely the sharp contrast between the diligent slaves as opposed to the slothful slave. For these reasons

⁴⁵W. F. Moulton and A. S. Geden, editors, A Concordance to the Greek Testament (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), p. 399.

⁴⁶Goebel, op. cit., pp. 407ff.

⁴⁷Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Gospel of Matthew, edited by Frederick Crombie and William Stewart, translated from the German by Peter Christe (ninth revised edition; New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1934), pp. 440f. Hereafter this work is referred to as Meyer, Matthew.

⁴⁸Alexander Balmain Bruce, The Synoptic Gospels, in The Expositor's Greek Testament, edited by W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., n.d.), I, 301f. Hereafter this work is referred to as Bruce, Gospels.

we prefer the Nestle⁴⁹ reading where *ἐνθούς* modifies *πορευθεὶς* and stands at the head of the sentence which runs through v. 16.

v. 16.

ἤρξατο -- ἐκέρδησεν --v. 16, which climaxes in these two verbs, is purposely constructed to illustrate the intense, diligent, and bustling activity of the five-talent slave--immediately he goes . . . takes . . . trades (works) . . . gains. Here is the commentary Matthew provides when the master later rejoices, "Well done, good and faithful slave. . . ." (Matthew 25:21,23). As D. Drummond points out, the "inward heart is characterized by the outward hands."⁵⁰

Textually, some manuscripts prefer *ἐποίησεν* in favor of *ἐκέρδησεν*. Save for the Sinaiticus, however, the attestation is weak. Then, too, the nuances of the verbs decide against this change. According to Goebel, *ποιέω* refers more specifically to the "mode of acquisition," while *κερδαίνω* refers more specifically to the success involved.⁵¹ As a partner to *ἔργαζομαι*, then, *κερδαίνω* would seem more

⁴⁹Novum Testamentum Grace, Nestle's twenty-third edition, Matthew 25:15. Hereafter this work is referred to as Nestle.

⁵⁰Drummond, op. cit., p. 422.

⁵¹Goebel, op. cit., p. 408.

suitable in this particular instance. The one verb emphasizes the activity, the other emphasizes the success of that activity.

ἄλλα πέντε --The first slave increased his holdings by 100 per cent.

v. 17.

ὡσαύτως --The behavior pattern of the first slave is likewise the behavior pattern of the second slave. As the former, so the latter was diligent and increased his holdings by 100 per cent.

v. 18.

ἀπελθὼν --This verb indicates at once the strong contrast in character between the third slave and the first slave. In v. 16 the text reads *λαβὼν ἔργασατο* --the slave took the money and worked with it. Here we read *λαβὼν ἀπελθὼν* --the slave took the money and went off with it. So where the first slave involved himself in his task, the third slave disengaged himself from his task. We have here the provocation for v. 30, where the master, in turn, disassociates himself from the third slave.

ἔρυσεν γὰρ καὶ ἔκρυψεν τὰ ἀργύρια --This action of the slave testifies that from the beginning he was motivated by but one concern--to preserve the trust his master had given him. But this, in turn, reflects the difference in dispositions between this slave and the first

two. They were concerned about the master and what they could gain for him. Driven by this thought, they were willing to stand the risk of failure which any venture incurs, together with any unfavorable consequences which such failure might have brought upon them. The third slave, however, thought only of himself. He was willing to incur no personal risk for the welfare of his master, and he set about at once to secure himself against legal responsibility for the lord's money. For this reason he dug a hole in the earth. According to Jewish law such an act had the following significance: if anyone took the precaution to bury a deposit which had been entrusted to him, he was not lawfully responsible for replacing that deposit, even should it be stolen.⁵²

Thus, the third slave was legally safe. On the one hand, if all went well, he had preserved the money which had originally been given to him and could return it; on the other hand, should the money be stolen, he still could plead that he had complied with the law and was free from prosecution. But in the last analysis the consequences were anything but legal. Goebel makes a clear point of this when he says, "To bury a sum of money in the earth seems, indeed, the securest way of preserving it; but in reality the money [was] thus most completely

⁵²Strack-Billerbeck, Matthäus, p. 972.

withdrawn from the work in the world for which it exists, and [was] rendered a useless, worthless thing."⁵³

v. 19.

μετὰ δε πολὺν χρόνον --According to

Bruce, this phrase is "an elastic one, and may denote either a large portion of the life of an individual, or an age in the history of the world."⁵⁴ If this is correct, then this phrase is of importance both for the story of the parable as well as for its allegorical implications.

In the case of the former, it means that the slaves enjoyed a considerable length of time away from the master (perhaps years). In this way the first two slaves were confirmed in their diligence, while the third slave was confirmed in his idleness. In the case of the latter, Matthew uses this phrase to tell the church of his day that an imminent expectation of the consummation of all things (Matthew 24:34) is not to deter Christians from diligently undertaking the tasks of the kingdom and their work in this world.

εὐναίρεσ λόγον

--In terms of our story, this phrase indicates that the master now returns and reviews the work of each slave.

⁵³Goebel, op. cit., p. 424.

⁵⁴Alexander Balsain Bruce, The Parabolic Teaching of Christ (third revised edition; New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1890), p. 210. Hereafter this work is referred to as Bruce, Parabolic Teaching.

In terms of the Jewish religion, however, "settling accounts" carries a particular significance, which Major notes as follows:

On New Year's Day all that come into the world pass before him (God) like legions of soldiers, for it is written "He that fashioneth the hearts of them all, that considereth all their works (Ps. 33:15)." At this time the doings of each man are reviewed and a verdict passed on them. The ensuing period from New Year's Day until the Day of Atonement is allowed for repentance; and on the Day of Atonement the sentence, whatever it may be, is pronounced.⁵⁵

In view of this, the mention of the phrase "settling accounts" to a Jewish audience would have immediately reminded the people of the Final Judgment. A glance at the texts shows that this idiom is common to both Matthew and Luke; consequently, we may assume that it was part of the original story which lies behind the parables of the Talents and the Pounds. But this, in turn, is a strong indication that the original story, which Jesus borrowed and adapted to serve his own purposes, stems from Jewish tradition.

Within the scope of Matthew's theology "settling accounts" indicates that the first evangelist has reinterpreted the "reckoning" aspect of Jewish eschatology in terms of the Second Coming of Christ (Cf. Matthew 25:31-46). In so doing, Matthew has made a differentiation which the Jews did not, since for them the one coming of the Messiah inaugurated both the end and the Final Judgment. Against this view,

⁵⁵Major, op. cit., p. 538.

Matthew says that the Messiah has come, but that the Final Judgment has not.

v. 20.

καὶ προσελθὼν ὁ τὰ πέντε τάλαντα --The slaves step before the master one by one and report. The diligent slaves report success (Cf. Matthew 25:22).

v. 21.

εὖ--Textually, this is an adverb which is used in an absolute sense and carries the force of an interjection, "well done!" "excellent!"⁵⁶ It must be understood in terms of the vocatives σοῦλε , ἀγαθέ , πιστέ .⁵⁷

σοῦλε ἀγαθέ καὶ πιστέ --To understand "good" and "faithful" we must consider the perspective of our story. "Good" here does not primarily characterize a certain moral or religious state such as it does in Matthew 5:45, "for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Cf. Matthew 7:11,17f.; 12:34f.). The interpretive key would rather seem to be found in Matthew 19:16ff., "And behold, one came up to him, saying, 'Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?' And he said to him, 'Why do you ask me about what is good? One there is who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.'" "

The point to notice is that Jesus refers to God as

⁵⁶Arndt-Gingrich, op. cit., p. 317.

⁵⁷Goebel, op. cit., p. 411.

"good" and the way to the good as being through the commandments. But this is just another way of saying that we are to be as God (Matthew 5:48), to have the same nature, the same desires, and the same will. In our story, then, when the master calls the slave "good," he is praising him because his will was at one with that of the master--he was of the same mind and the same intent. Bruce's translation of "singlehearted" would seem to support this interpretation.⁵⁸

But from this point it is possible theologically to see the relationship between "good" in the sense of singlehearted as compared to "good" in the sense of a moral state. In God's eyes, those who are good, and not evil, are precisely those who are like him (Matthew 5:48), i.e. they desire to act as he does, for they have his heart and will (Matthew 5:44ff.).

In regard to the term, "faithful," we find a commentary on it in Matthew 24:45f. There the slave is "faithful" when he carries out the instructions his master has given him. So faithfulness is "diligence"--an excellent description of the first slave in our parable.

Finally, the close syntactical and grammatical relationship between good and faithful further suggests that these words show an inner connection with each other, both in

⁵⁸Bruce, Parabolic Teaching, p. 212.

terms of our story and theologically. Perhaps Bruce has identified this in the following statement:

One who is good, in the sense of putting his whole heart and soul into his work, cannot fail to be faithful, for the very secret of fidelity is single-heartedness, and the sole cause of unfaithfulness is a divided heart. . . . Love is its own taskmaster.⁵⁹

ἐπὶ ὀλίγα --On the surface it may seem that it is hardly appropriate to speak in terms of ὀλίγα when one considers the great worth of a talent. But the antithesis between ὀλίγα and πολλῶν would rather seem to emphasize the great contrast between whatever the slave had before, even should that have been relatively much, as compared with what he has now in terms of the blessings his lord has given him.⁶⁰ In a homiletical manner Jülicher expresses this as follows:

was er [der Messias] in seiner Herrlichkeit dem [Sklave] zu bieten hat, ist immer πολλὰ, womit verglichen auch die höchsten und einflussreichsten Aemter auf Erden nur ein "weniges" darstellen.⁶¹

ἐπὶ πολλῶν γε καταστῆσω --It is totally

beside the point of the story to attempt to determine the precise meaning of πολλῶν.⁶² What our parable

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 211.

⁶¹Jülicher, op. cit., p. 475.

⁶²The reason this must be stressed is that all such attempts run the inherent danger of differentiating between the first two slaves in a way which the text does not authorize. The text reads word for word exactly the same in expressing the joy and the reward of the master towards both

wishes to say is that whatever talents or opportunities were granted to the first slave beforehand, these talents or opportunities are now to be greatly increased. Furthermore, *καταστήσει* emphasizes that the lord's blessing does not remove a slave from duty, but that it gives him the opportunity to serve in a far greater capacity, at the same time implying that his success, too, will likewise increase. The theological implications of this are drawn together very nicely by M. Dods in the following statement:

The talents gained are left in the hands that gained them, and wider opportunities for their use are afforded. This is the reward of the faithful servant in Christ; the grace he has diligently used is increased, and his opportunities continually multiply. He is always entering upon his reward.⁶³

εὐελοθε εἰς τὴν χάριν τοῦ κυρίου σου

--The key word in this clause is *χάρις*, and the commentators seem to interpret it according to one of four possibilities. The first possibility is presented by R. Trench, who claims that it represents a feast or festival to which each "good and faithful" slave is admitted.⁶⁴ The second

of these diligent slaves (Cf. Mt. 25:21,23). So diligence and singleheartedness, not the amount of return, are the important factors.

⁶³Marcus Dods, The Parables of Our Lord (New York: Hodder & Stoughten, n.d.), p. 274.

⁶⁴Richard Chenevix Trench, Notes on the Parables of Our Lord (seventh revised edition; New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1855), p. 224.

suggestion is that of Jeremias, who likewise interprets *Χαρά* in terms of a feast, but who asserts that this whole statement is a later Christological addition, so that we are no longer standing before "ein irdischer Kaufmann, sondern der Christus der Parusie."⁶⁵ The third interpretation is that of Meyer, and later, M'Neile, who hold that *Χαρά* refers to nothing more specific than the mere "bliss of the divine kingdom."⁶⁶ Last, Goebel and Bruce maintain that *Χαρά* refers to the "joy of lordship" which the slave now shares with his master.⁶⁷

An examination of these interpretations reveals not so much the problem of error as of an exaggerated exclusiveness. For the first idea (*Χαρά* as a meal) is legitimate, since Jewish tradition knows it as an eschatological picture connected with the advent of the Messiah.⁶⁸ On the other hand, the ideas of "bliss" or "lordship" can also claim to be authentic, since they pass well within the framework of the parable's story. Against Jeremias, however, it must be pointed out that while Matthew doubtlessly hears the voice of the Christ in these words, yet neither this, nor the fact that Luke does not include this statement

⁶⁵ Jeremias, Gleichnisse, p. 52. Cf. also Smith, op. cit., p. 166.

⁶⁶ M'Neile, op. cit., p. 365.

⁶⁷ Bruce, Gospels, p. 303.

⁶⁸ Dodd, op. cit., pp. 55f.

in his version, are proof that these words are unauthentic.⁶⁹

Regardless of the precise interpretation of *Χαίρει*, it is clear that the statement, "Enter into the joy of your lord," is important both literally and allegorically. Within the framework of the story it refers to the businessman who promotes his faithful slaves, and who may have highlighted this occasion by preparing a banquet in the slave's honor. This promotion now means that the slave is to have greater authority, and, on that account, it fosters greater fellowship between master and servant. Allegorically, this statement refers to Christ who rewards his faithful Christians on the Day of Judgment and brings them into his heavenly kingdom where they enjoy the bliss of his fellowship and share in his ruling power.

vv. 22, 23.

προβελθὼν καὶ ὁ τὸ δύο τέλιαντα

--The two-talent slave presents himself exactly as the five-talent slave. This second slave, too, has increased his trust by 100 per cent, and he, too, is given the same reward as that of the former slave.

⁶⁹Jeremias, *Gleichnisse*, p. 52, works on the assumption that any statement not shared by both Matthew and Luke is due to later redaction after the time of Jesus. But this does not consider that both of these versions could have stemmed from Jesus himself.

v. 24

ἐλθὼν

--The force of the perfect participle emphasizes that the slave had received the one talent and has kept it right up to the time when he is to give account.⁷⁰ At this point we have the "preserving tactic" of the third slave grammatically accentuated.

ἔγνων

--The aorist is used ("I knew you") in favor of the perfect ("I know you") because the slave is attempting to explain his action in terms of how he felt toward the master previously, i.e. when he first received the talent as a trust (Matthew 25:15).

ἐκλεῖψας

--This word is of infrequent occurrence in the New Testament. The text of the parable, however, presents the commentary. This master was hard because he reaps where he does not sow and gathers where he does not winnow (Matthew 25:24), i.e. he appropriates for himself the profits of another's labors.⁷¹

The question immediately arises as to whether this is a true characterization of the master. Jeremias believes that it is when he states that Jesus certainly would never go so far as to compare himself to a man, "der raffgierig

⁷⁰ Ernest De Witt Burton, Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek (third edition; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1955), p. 71.

⁷¹ Goebel, op. cit., p. 414. Cf. also Bruce, Gospels, p. 303.

hinter dem Gelde her ist, rücksichtslos auf den eigenen Vorteil bedacht. . . ."72 But this is a rash judgment and does not consider the inner logic of the parable.

In the first place, the generous way in which the master dealt with the first two slaves (Matthew 25:21,23 --above all, "enter into the joy of your lord") proves that the master was not inconsiderate of anyone but himself. Second, the fact that the third slave did not busy himself in behalf of his master but rather secured himself against legal responsibility for his trust (Matthew 25:18), together with the fact that he views the master as "hard," prove that he was not of one mind nor will with his lord. Consequently, this slave's view of his lord's real character is necessarily prejudiced. Third, the slave is now on trial. Accordingly, he must justify his behavior. But because he did nothing, he cannot blame his slothfulness on outward circumstances, nor on personal inaptitude (since each slave received a trust according to his own ability (Matthew 25:15)). As a result, the only course available to him is to attempt to exonerate himself by directing the fault to his master. Once again, therefore, the slave's description of his lord would not be just. Last, the master himself never admits that what this slave says is true. When he repeats the slave's argument in

⁷²Jeremias, Gleichnisse, p. 51.

v. 26, he does so in order to convict the slave out of his "own mouth," as Luke expresses it (Luke 19:22). For these four reasons, then, we conclude that the character which the slave ascribes to his master is not an accurate description either of the lord's business dealings or of him as a person. A. Edersheim seems to share our opinion in the following statement:

Confessedly [the view of the third slave] proceeded from a want of knowledge of Him [the lord, i.e. Christ], as if He were a hard, exacting Master, not One Who reckons even the least service as done to Himself; from misunderstanding also of what work for Christ is, in which nothing can ever fail or be lost; and, lastly, from want of joyous sympathy with it.

.....

It needs no comment to show that his own words [those of the third slave], however honest and self righteous they might sound, admitted dereliction of his work and duty as a servant, and entire misunderstanding as well as heart-alienation from his Master.⁷³

Θερίζων . . . ἐπιτελεῖς . . . συνάγων
 . . . θεεκόρητος --Textually, it is interesting to examine these illustrations in Matthew, since Luke, by exchanging the last two verbs in favor of ἀρᾶς and ἔθρας (Luke 19:21), presents slightly different pictures. According to Arndt-Gingrich, v. 24b should be translated, "reaping where you did not sow, and gathering

⁷³ Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953), II, 462.

where you did not winnow (scatter)."⁷⁴ Accordingly, we have a case of parallelism, which, if *διασκορπίζω* means "winnow," refers to two particular harvest illustrations. The first picture--sowing and reaping--refers, of course, to the planting and the harvesting. The second picture, however---gathering and winnowing---refers to threshing, where one worker winnows with the fan, thus separating the grain from the chaff, so that another may rake out the grain but leave the chaff for burning.⁷⁵

The alternative is to translate *διασκορπίζω* as "scatter," in which case both halves of the parallelism refer exclusively to planting and harvesting. Most of the commentators prefer the first interpretation, which is also supported by Luke's text in that Luke, too, varies the picture from the first half of the parallelism to the second.⁷⁶

The point of these illustrations, of course, has nothing to do with farming at all; they are idiomatic, i.e. their purpose is to denote the alleged greediness of the master.

⁷⁴Arndt-Gingrich, op. cit., pp. 359f., 187, 789.

⁷⁵Trench, op. cit., p. 227.

⁷⁶Bruce, Parabolic Teaching, p. 203; Goebel, op. cit., p. 414; Meyer, Matthew, pp. 441f.

v. 25.

Φοβηθεὶς --The fear which the third slave experienced is that which Major explains as follows:

The fear of the slave is to be understood as the fear of losing what had been entrusted to him in any enterprise which he might undertake. His argument appears to be: If I make a profit the master gets it; if I make a loss he will come upon me to make it good. Therefore the best course is to do nothing.⁷⁷

How groundless this fear is is demonstrated by the master's charitable dealings with the first two slaves. He expected diligence as was his right.

ἴδε ἔχασεν τὸ εὖ --The third slave returns the exact amount which his master had entrusted to him. *ἴδε* would seem to indicate not only that the third slave felt no shame over his behavior, but that he even feels that the master will be pleased with him for having returned his trust without loss (Cf. *ἴδε* Matthew 25:20,22).

v. 26.

Πονηρὸν δούλε καὶ ὀκνηρὸν --Here is the antithesis to the praise which the first two slaves enjoyed (Matthew 25:21,23). Where they were good and faithful, i.e. singlehearted and diligent, this slave is "wicked" and "indolent,"⁷⁸ i.e. of a different spirit than his master and slothful. The force of this contrast reaches

⁷⁷Major, *op. cit.*, p. 539.

⁷⁸Arndt-Gingrich, *op. cit.*, p. 565.

its full intensity when one notes that *ἀγαθός* and *πονηρός* also represent the contrast which Matthew draws between God and Satan (Matthew 19:17; 13:19, 38f.). The immediate application of *πονηρός* within the parable, however, is not to judge this slave's intrinsic moral worthiness or unworthiness,⁷⁹ but rather to say that he acted foolishly, his behavior was bad.

⁷⁹δελς --Morgan understands the question of v. 26 as a form of satire, "Is that what you knew . . . is that your estimate?"⁸⁰ Meyer, in turn, views it as a question of astonishment.⁸¹ Goebel's interpretation, however, is to be preferred, and for the reasons which he himself states as follows:

⁷⁹δελς is not a question of surprise, nor . . . a concession, nor . . . ironical. . . . [It is] to reproduce the servant's words, in order to convict him out of his own mouth, to show why the master called him a "bad" and "idle" slave.⁸²

v. 27.

⁸⁰δελς --The master drives the slave's argument ad absurdum. Assuming all the conditions which the slave set forth, the latter still stands convicted, for had he actually had the

⁷⁹Bruce, Parabolic Teaching, p. 205.

⁸⁰Morgan, Parables, pp. 156f.

⁸¹Meyer, Matthew, p. 442.

⁸²Goebel, op. cit., p. 416. Cf. also Wilhelm Michaelis, Die Gleichnisse Jesu (Hamburg: Furche Verlag, 1956), p. 110.

master's interests at heart or even feared him as he had asserted (Matthew 25:24), then at the very least he could have delivered his talent to the money-changers.

Βαλῆν--Contrary to Meyer, "Flinging down upon the table of the money-changers," does not "represent the indifference of the proceeding."⁸³ In fact, there is reason to believe that this may have been a technical expression to denote the specific act of depositing money with the bankers.⁸⁴

τραπεζίταις . . . τόκῳ --Edersheim and E. Rice provide some insight into Palestinian banking practices as follows:

The Jewish Law distinguished between "interest" and "increase," and entered into many and intricate details on the subject. Such transactions were forbidden with Israelites, but allowed with Gentiles. As in Rome, the business of "money-changers" and that of "bankers" seem to have run into each other. The Jewish "bankers" bear precisely the same name. . . . In Rome very high interest seems to have been charged in early times; by and by it was lowered, till it was fixed, first at 8½, and then at 4 1/6, per cent. But these laws were not of permanent duration. Practically, usury was unlimited. It soon became the custom to charge monthly interest at the rate of 1 percent a month. Yet there were prosperous times, as at the close of the Republic, when the rate was so low as 4 percent; during the early Empire

⁸³Meyer, Matthew, p. 442.

⁸⁴James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1952), p. 102.

it stood at 8 percent. This, of course, is what we may call fair business transactions.⁸⁵

In view of this, the courses of action which the slave could have taken were the following:

1. Use the money in trading on account; or, 2. Loan the money to money-changers or bankers who would pay interest and reloan it at a higher rate to traders or in farming the revenues of some province.⁸⁶

Then, too, as we noted before, the third slave could have delivered his trust to the bankers in fullest confidence and security. For any banker who accepted a sum of money, together with the permission to use that money according to his own discretion, was fully responsible for returning it.⁸⁷

v. 28

ἄρατε . . . τότε τῷ ἔχοντι τὰ δέκα
τὰ λικντα --The slave who made no use of the talent now

loses his trust altogether. He surrenders it to the slave who has ten talents. Why this first slave should have received the extra talent and not the second one is explained by v. 15, i.e. it seems that we have another expression of "to each according to his own ability." Under no circumstances, however, does it indicate that the

⁸⁵Edersheim, op. cit., p. 463.

⁸⁶Edwin W. Rice, Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew (London: Robert Scott, 1911), p. 254.

⁸⁷Strack-Billerbeck, Matthäus, p. 970.

first slave now receives more recognition than the second (Matthew 25:21,23). The point to be emphasized here is that the third slave lost his talent, not that the first slave gained a talent.

v. 29.

τῷ γὰρ ἔχοντι παντὶ . . . ἀρθίζεται ἅπ' αὐτοῦ

--The principle which the parable has illustrated

up to this point by the action of the characters is now explicitly stated. The first half of the verse, τῷ γὰρ ἔχοντι παντὶ δοθίζεται καὶ περισσεύθεται is illustrated by the first two slaves. They busied themselves in trade and returned a profit to the lord. As such, they were people who "had." The result is that the lord blessed them; they were faithful in little, with the result that the master put them in charge of much. In this way, those who "had" now receive more. But these slaves also abound. This is illustrated in the story by their entering into the joy of their lord, where they share fellowship with him.

On the other hand, there is the third slave, and his case illustrates the second half of v. 29-- τοῦ δὲ μὴ ἔχοντος καὶ ὃ ἔχει ἀρθίζεται ἅπ' αὐτοῦ. He is the one who "had not," for out of fear he buried his treasure in the ground and, consequently, could show no return. His lack of a return, however, was merely the surface symptom of a deeper malady--a divided heart and the lack of fidelity. For this reason, even that which he had

(the one talent) was taken away from him and given to another who would be faithful and diligent in using it.

With the entire parable summarized in this sentence, so to speak, we come to the tertium comparationis. We express this as follows: Even as the master in the story entrusted his wealth to his slaves and then returned from his journey to prove them, blessing those who were diligent and punishing him who was unfaithful, so Christ in like manner entrusts his work to his Christians (church) and will return at the Final Day to prove them, blessing those who are diligent and punishing those who are unfaithful. The admonition of this parable exhorts to diligence in view of the impending return of the Lord. We have an example of Christian paraenesis, which becomes especially obvious when we remember that it is to the disciples that Jesus speaks this story (Matthew 24:1), to those who already stand in grace and to whom the imperative, "Be diligent!" is the necessary "other half" of the grace they already have received.

But the question now arises as to whether or not v. 29 can be interpreted as a "moral law" somewhat in the fashion that the more one works, the more one will develop one's capacities and the more one will get; or, contrariwise, the less one does, the less one retains his capacities. This type of interpretation is very popular among

the commentators,⁸⁸ but it seems to be quite foreign to Matthew and perhaps stems from considering this logion apart from its context. When one recalls that for Matthew the master of the parable is Jesus Christ, that the slaves are Christians, that the reckoning is the Final Judgment, and that the reward is heaven and the punishment damnation, in short, that this is an eschatological parable dealing with the "end of the end," then v. 29, too, must be placed within this framework. Accordingly, the "ones who have" are those Christians who have been diligent in the tasks of the Savior, and the "more" they receive is heaven and fellowship with Him. The one who "has not" is he who is not diligent in the things of the Savior, and when he loses all, he loses also the presence of the Lord. In Matthew's terms it is conceivable that even the most industrious man who amasses great earthly accomplishments could still be the one-talent slave who is not diligent in the things of God. This points up how unsuited this logion is for expressing a general "moral law."

Finally, another question regarding v. 29 is the formgeschichtliche problem which this logion poses. A survey of the synoptics shows that it is located in five places, namely in the parable of the Pounds (Luke 19:26),

⁸⁸Goebel, op. cit., p. 418; Major, loc. cit.; Rice, op. cit., p. 255; Taylor, op. cit., p. 194; Meyer, Matthew, p. 442.

here in the parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:29), and in the parallel verses of Matthew 13:12, Mark 4:25, and Luke 8:13, where it relates to the purpose for Jesus' speaking in parables. In the latter case, the very fact that Matthew uses this logion in a different order than Mark and Luke (Matthew places it before the interpretation of the parable of the Sower, while Mark and Luke place it after) without at the same time changing the point to which it applies, shows that the synoptics are unanimous in testifying that Jesus spoke this logion regarding the hearing and understanding of his parables. The question, then, arises, is this logion also original to the parables of the Talents and the Pounds?

To be candid, if our investigation is sound, the arguments do not admit to a decisive answer either positively or negatively. Against the authenticity of this logion as an original member of these parables are the following considerations:⁸⁹

a. If one omits v. 29 from Matthew's text altogether, his parable flows to a perfect conclusion without the slightest difficulty. In fact, from a literary point of view, the style of the story seems to improve.

b. The very same thing is true of Luke 19:26.

⁸⁹Of. also Jeremiah, Gleichnisse, p. 54; Smith, op. cit., pp. 167f.

Furthermore, it can be argued that Luke 19:25 (which is not found in Matthew's Gospel) is also a later addition, one purpose of which was to effect a smoother transition between the story of the parable and this logion.

c. Again, the very fact that this logion is a general principle explaining the action of the parable and, therefore, displays a close inner connection with the total story argues against its authenticity. For its very suitability would explain why a redactor would want to insert such a logion in the text.

d. Finally, v. 30 of Matthew's text is a formula peculiar to the first evangelist.⁹⁰ This means that v. 29 represents the parable's traditional conclusion as Matthew received it. Luke's text shows that the same is true of his version. But it is precisely in the introductions and conclusions of units where redaction is most frequent.⁹¹ Accordingly, this logion could simply have been added to the end of this parable for the purpose of summarizing it.

Against the preceding arguments stand the following considerations which seem to testify that Matthew 25:29 was an original member of the parables of the Talents and the Pounds:

⁹⁰Cf. Moulton-Geden, *op. cit.*, Βρυχμός, p. 153; *ἡ ἑξήκοντος*, p. 349.

⁹¹Luke 19:11 is an example of redactionary activity at the beginning of a pericope, and Matthew 25:30 is an example of redaction at the end of a pericope.

a. The logion does indeed suit the content matter of both parables.

b. Because both Matthew and Luke contain this logion, were it added by redactors, they would have had to have done this quite early. But it is exactly in the first stages of the tradition where redaction would have been most difficult, since the tradition would still be quite near to its original source.

c. It is certainly not impossible that Jesus could have used this logion in more than one situation.

d. If Matthew 25:29 and Luke 19:26 represent an added logion, then it is legitimate to ask how the original parable ended. As an ending, v. 28 tends to be somewhat abrupt, and to assume that the original ending was lost or deliberately set aside is to suggest a handling of the tradition which is out of character with a Jewish-minded community such as the early church.⁹² Matthew 25:29 and Luke 19:26, therefore, must have been original members of the parables of the Talents and the Pounds.⁹³

Depending then, on how one evaluates the various arguments, Matthew 25:29 may or may not be accepted as an original member of the parable of the Talents. One thing

⁹²Supra, pp. 44f.

⁹³The following scholars argue against the authenticity of Matthew 25:29 and Luke 19:26: Michaelis, op. cit., p. 111; Jeremias, Gleichnisse, p. 54; Dodd, op. cit., pp. 147ff.

is clear, however, the parable as we know it finds its climax in this logion, and this logion reflects Christian paraenesis.

v. 30.

ἐκβάλετε εἰς τὸ ἄνθος τὸ ἐξώτερον

--In this clause, which is peculiar to Matthew,⁹⁴ we meet the logical conclusion which the very first breach between the master and the third slave necessitated. The slave, who had never shared the will of his master, is now forbidden to share his master's presence, and this befalls him exactly at the time when the first two slaves are invited into the joy of the lord (Matthew 25:21,23).

Allegorically, the force of this clause rests with *ἄνθος*. According to Matthew, darkness represents a contrast to light both spiritual and physical (Matthew 4:16; 6:23; 27:45). It denotes the condition of being out of the kingdom (Matthew 8:12; 22:13). Being in darkness, then, is being separated from the person and presence of Christ, for it is he who calls the kingdom into being (Matthew 4:17), and it is he who is the light which shines on the people sitting in darkness (Matthew 4:16). It is, therefore, damnation.

⁹⁴Moulton-Geden, op. cit., *ἐξώτερος*, p. 349.

ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλανθμός καὶ ὁ βρυγμός
τῶν ὀδόντων

--According to Moulton-Geden, this formula is overwhelmingly peculiar to the first Gospel.⁹⁵ Textually, then, it stems from the hand of Matthew, and allegorically, it refers to the damnation which is meted out in the Great Judgment (Matthew 25:31ff.) where all the "third" slaves will "go away into eternal punishment" (Matthew 25:46).

2. The Exegesis of the Parable of the Pounds
(Luke 19:11-27)

v. 11.

Ἀκούοντων, δὲ αὐτῶν ταῦτα προεθεῖς
εἶπεν παραβολήν --This clause demonstrates the close relationship between the parable of the Pounds and the Zacchaeus pericope (Luke 19:1ff.). The question has been raised as to the reference of αὐτῶν . The commentators seem to agree that it includes more than just the circle of the twelve, perhaps even members from the crowds that followed Jesus.⁹⁶ Bruce deduces from vv. 12, 14, 27, that Jesus spoke this parable to both disciples and Pharisees, which is very likely.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Ibid., κλανθμός , p. 549; βρυγμός , p. 153.

⁹⁶ William F. Arndt, Bible Commentary, The Gospel According to St. Luke (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), p. 391.

⁹⁷ Bruce, Parabolic Teaching, pp. 217ff.

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δὲ τὰ ἑγγύς εἶναι Ἰουδαίῳ αὐτῶν
καὶ δοκεῖν αὐτοῦς ὅτι παραχρῆμα μέλλει
ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀναφαίνεσθαι

--Whereas Matthew places the Sitz im Leben for the parable of the Talents with Jesus and the disciples talking on the Mount of Olives, Luke places the Sitz im Leben for the parable of the Pounds in the area of Zacchaeus' house (Luke 19:5ff.) before an audience who expects Jesus to inaugurate the visible kingdom of God at once. The purpose of the parable of the Pounds, then, is to explain that the kingdom of God will indeed appear, but not until the end of the ages. Consequently, it serves a double function in Luke's Gospel--negatively, the parable of the Pounds intends to correct the mistaken notion that the messianic kingdom would come "with political upheaval culminating in the establishment of an Israelite Empire";⁹⁸ positively, it emphasizes that this kingdom most certainly will come, but only after some time, and then it will coincide with the Final Judgment (Luke 19:15ff.).

But the consideration of the Sitz im Leben of the parable of the Pounds raises the question of the value which this parable may have had for Luke himself. Some scholars believe that it was of more importance for Luke's day and age than for the time of Jesus. Thus, Conzelmann

⁹⁸Major, op. cit., p. 606.

views it in the light of Luke's eschatology.⁹⁹ He contends that the early Christians awaited the immediate expectation of the end. But because the Parousia delayed, the problem arose as to the relationship between the time of the church and the history of Jesus. Luke, then, wrote his Gospel to solve this problem, and he did so by interpreting "salvation history" along the time line of the "Zeit Israels . . . Zeit Jesu . . . Zeit der Kirche."¹⁰⁰ But this means that whereas the Christians at the time of Easter had expected the Parousia at once, Luke now corrects this view to say that it will not come immediately, but that the age of the church must first intervene.¹⁰¹ The parable of the Pounds supports Luke in this purpose. It emphasizes that the end is not now, but that there is first to be another era, indeed, a time of probation (Luke 19:13), and only after this will the Final Judgment come.¹⁰² If this interpretation is correct, then we have at least two Sitz im Leben to keep in mind--the first is that indicated by Luke where Jesus stands close to Jerusalem, and the second is that which stems from the time of the evangelist himself.

⁹⁹Hans Conzelmann, Die Mitte der Zeit (dritte überarbeitete Auflage; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1960), pp. 87ff.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., pp. 139f.

¹⁰¹Ibid., pp. 123f.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 113.

Textually, as we noted before, v. 11 forms the transition between our parable and the pericope dealing with Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1ff.). It belongs to the framework of the Gospel and, as such, it most probably stems from the hand of Luke himself.¹⁰³

v. 12.

εὐγενὴς . . . βασιλείου . . . ὑποστρίψαι

--According to Matthew, the master was a businessman.

According to Luke, he is of noble blood. Furthermore, while Matthew merely states that the lord made a journey, Luke mentions explicitly that the purpose of this journey was to gain rule over the region in which he lived.

Allegorically, all of these traits serve to make the identification of Christ with the nobleman all the more explicit.¹⁰⁴ For, according to Luke, Jesus of Nazareth, whom God raised up and exalted as the Christ (Acts 2:32f., 36), is the nobleman who now departs to the far away land of heaven, where, crowned in majesty, he sits at the right hand of God (Acts 2:33,36) and will return visibly and clothed in power to manifest his rule over the region which is the world (Luke 21:27).

¹⁰³Jeremias, Gleichnisse, p. 51. Cf. also Major, loc. cit.

¹⁰⁴Norval Geldenhuys, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1954), p. 474. Cf. also Arndt, op. cit., pp. 391f.

Historically, in regard to the hypothesis that the parable of the Pounds represents a fusion of two independent stories (that of the master who called his three slaves to account and that of the nobleman who gained a crown), some commentators assert that the second story depicts a real historical event, namely Archelaus' journey to Rome to obtain the throne of Herod the Great, his father. The important facts seem to have been the following: In 4 B.C., Herod the Great died and left his throne to his sons. Archelaus, desirous of the crown, journeyed to Rome in order that the emperor might confer the right of succession on him. But from at least two quarters he encountered opposition. On the one hand, Antipas contended for the same crown. On the other hand, the Jews, who hated and feared Archelaus, opposed his nomination through the protest of a fifty-man delegation. Rome, however, did decide in favor of Archelaus, but at the same time entrusted him with no more than the rank of tetrarch, so that he was forced to divide the lands of his father with three others. In retaliation against this opposition, Archelaus returned to Palestine and executed approximately three thousand Jews. The argument, then, is that Jesus plays on this story because it was familiar to the people, though, to be sure, he radically adapts it to suit his own purposes.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵Jeremias, Gleichnisse, pp. 50f. Cf. also Major, loc. cit.; Arndt, loc. cit.

Whether this suggestion is true or not must remain undetermined. In favor of its truth is the fact that the parable and the historical event do conform so admirably. In addition, we know from other parables that Jesus did not hesitate to use unsavory characters as examples in his stories.¹⁰⁶

On the other hand, against the probability of this suggestion is the factor of time, since the Archelaus event would already have been approximately thirty-five years old before Jesus used it. Second, the similarity of these two stories could just as well be explained by the simple fact that it was no more than normal procedure during the days of the Roman empire for rulers to travel to Rome in order to secure the emperor's favor.¹⁰⁷ This story, therefore, could be reflecting mere custom. Consequently, the only certain thing that we can say in this matter is that the parable of the Pounds is a fusion of two earlier, independent stories.¹⁰⁸

μακροί—A. Plummer notes the sharp contrast which Luke draws between *μακροί* in v. 12, which refers to

¹⁰⁶ Bruce, Gospels, p. 605.

¹⁰⁷ Edersheim, op. cit., p. 466.

¹⁰⁸ Jeremias, Gleichnisse, p. 50f. Cf. also Major, op. cit., pp. 516ff.; Burton Scott Easton, The Gospel According to St. Luke (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), pp. 283ff.; J. Alexander Findlay, Jesus and His Parables (London: The Epworth Press, 1951), pp. 44f.

the time between the Ascension and the Second Coming, as opposed to *παροχρῆμα* in v. 11, which refers to the faulty notion that the messianic kingdom was to realize itself at once.¹⁰⁹

v. 13.

δρέκα δούλους . . . δρέκα ἀνάς --Matthew records that the three slaves received five, two, and one talents, respectively, while Luke records that ten slaves all received the same amount, one mina. In view of this, the commentators have raised several questions.

In the first place, several scholars, notably Jülicher, Jeremias, and Major, contend that Matthew's three slaves is a more authentic number than Luke's ten.¹¹⁰ The latter number allegedly betrays influence from the story of the nobleman, since a prince would undoubtedly have to have more than three attendants.¹¹¹ Furthermore, even in Luke's version only three of the slaves finally submit a report to the master.

Against these arguments, however, is the fact that

¹⁰⁹ Alfred Plummer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke, in The International Critical Commentary (fifth edition; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), p. 439. Hereafter this work is referred to as Plummer, Luke.

¹¹⁰ Jülicher, op. cit., II, 487; Jeremias, Gleichnisse, p. 52; Major, op. cit., p. 607.

¹¹¹ Jülicher, loc. cit.

the number ten is also a frequent Jewish symbol for completeness.¹¹² It is perfectly plausible that Luke's parable merely wants to indicate that to as many slaves as the nobleman had, regardless of their number, he gave but one mina. But this, in turn, would explain why only three of the slaves finally reported. They are representative of the entire group.¹¹³ Accordingly, Luke's number of ten need not be secondary.

Second, the commentators also ask which is the more original, Luke's mina or Matthew's talent? Jeremias, B. Easton, and others assert that the mina is original, mainly because a talent represents such a large sum of money.¹¹⁴ But we have already shown that it is impossible to decide this question, and for the following two reasons: (a) because Matthew's use of the talents corresponds perfectly to the inner logic of his parable; (b) and because these scholars base their decision for the mina largely on the presupposition that a smaller figure is automatically more authentic than a larger, or, conversely, that a larger figure automatically indicates redaction.¹¹⁵ But this certainly need not be the case. Therefore, neither

¹¹²Easton, op. cit., p. 280.

¹¹³Moschner, op. cit., p. 181.

¹¹⁴Jeremias, Gleichnisse, p. 52; Easton, op. cit., p. 283.

¹¹⁵Supra, pp. 55f.

the talents nor the minas must of necessity be viewed as secondary in their respective parables.

Again, a question is raised in regard to the varying amounts of entrusted money. In Matthew the ratio is 5--3--1, while in Luke each slave receives the same amount (one). The explanation for this seems to rest with the inner coherence of the two parables. In Matthew the master knew the ability of each slave and divided his working capital accordingly (Matthew 25:15). In Luke the nobleman gave each slave the same amount, precisely because he wanted to determine what each man was able to do in the face of any future governing positions which he may have to offer.¹¹⁶ One mina for each would measure the varying capacities of the various slaves.

Finally, in terms of the monetary worth of the mina, the commentators are fairly unanimous in agreeing with Arndt-Gingrich, who estimate its value at between eighteen and twenty dollars.¹¹⁷

Turning now to the allegorical interpretation of the mina, the commentators disagree at this point just as they did previously in regard to the talents. The majority believe that

¹¹⁶Taylor, op. cit., p. 436.

¹¹⁷Arndt-Gingrich, op. cit., p. 526.

the mina represents the Gospel or the Word of God,¹¹⁸ but one scholar thinks of it as the gift of the Holy Spirit,¹¹⁹ another as opportunities of service,¹²⁰ and still another as the work of the mission.¹²¹ To us it would seem that these suggestions carry us into the realm of speculation. The most important thing is not to determine what precisely the minas represent, as rather to remember that they were given as a gift and not as a possession.

πραγματεύεσθε—Textually, the manuscripts disagree as to whether *πραγματεύομαι* should be rendered as an imperative or infinitive. Those that favor an infinitive rendition refer *πραγματεύομαι* to the clause that precedes it, namely *καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτοῦς (πραγματεύεσθαι or πραγματεύεσθαι)*, while those that prefer an imperative rendition refer *πραγματεύομαι* to the clause which follows it, namely *ἐν ᾧ ἔρχομαι*. When one considers the intent of the text, the most satisfactory solution seems to be the

¹¹⁸Goebel, *op. cit.*, p. 446. Cf. also Geldenhuys, *loc. cit.*; Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 433; G. Campbell Morgan, *The Gospel According to St. Luke* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1931), p. 247. Hereafter this latter work is referred to as Morgan, *Luke*.

¹¹⁹Ronald S. Wallace, *Many Things in Parables* (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1955), p. 139.

¹²⁰Drummond, *op. cit.*, p. 429.

¹²¹Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching*, p. 222.

following: that *πραγματεύομαι* should be grouped with *ἐν ᾧ ἔρχομαι* and rendered as direct discourse. But this, in turn, favors the Nestle text where *πραγματεύομαι* is placed in the imperative mood.¹²²

Lexically, *πραγματεύεσθε* means to "conduct or be engaged in business."¹²³ It is idiomatic, however, and intends to convey the idea of "buying up the opportunity."¹²⁴

ἐν ᾧ ἔρχομαι—Allegorically, this phrase refers to the Second Coming of Christ.

v. 14.

οἱ πολῖται—Here we confront the independent material which originally belonged to the story of the nobleman who sought a crown.

Allegorically, since the nobleman represents Christ, the citizens will most certainly refer to Christ's enemies, in this case the unbelieving Jews.¹²⁵ This, in turn, supports the conjecture that Jesus spoke this parable to a divided audience of both disciples and unbelievers, perhaps even Pharisees.¹²⁶

ἐμίθουν—As a verb in the imperfect tense, *ἐμίθουν*

¹²²Nestle, *op. cit.*, Luke 19:13.

¹²³Arndt-Gingrich, *op. cit.*, p. 704.

¹²⁴Morgan, *Luke*, p. 247.

¹²⁵Plummer, *Luke*, p. 440.

¹²⁶*Supra*, p. 86.

denotes that the hatred of the citizens toward the nobleman did not abate in the least; rather they "kept on hating him."¹²⁷

Allegorically, perhaps Luke was thinking of the unceasing opposition which the Jews had set up against Christ--first, during his earthly ministry, and then against his church (Acts 8:1).

οὐ θέλομεν τοῦτον -- οὐ θέλομεν emphasizes the rebellious will of the citizens, and Plummer finds in τοῦτον an echo of contempt.¹²⁸

Allegorically, Luke no doubt understood the objection of this delegation as the personal rejection of Jesus by the Jews (Luke 24:47ff.; Acts 7:51).

v. 15.

λαβόντα τὴν βασιλείαν--The nobleman receives the crown despite the protest of the delegation, and now he returns to his new kingdom.

Jülicher asserts that because the nobleman's success is rendered by a participial construction we have textual proof that two stories were fused at this point. In the original story he feels that this success would have received major emphasis in a major construction.¹²⁹

¹²⁷Burton, op. cit., p. 12.

¹²⁸Plummer, Luke, p. 440.

¹²⁹Jülicher, op. cit., p. 433

Allegorically, the kingly power which the nobleman receives is the crown of power which Jesus received from the Father in his exaltation to the right hand of God (Acts 2:32ff.).

Φωνή θύνα --The new king, upon his return, calls his slaves to account. At this point, Luke's version begins to parallel Matthew's text quite closely. For the implications of "settling accounts," cf. Matthew's text on the parable of the Talents.¹³⁰

διεπραγματεύεσθε --The new king desires to know what each slave has gained by trading. His terminology points up the consistency of Luke's parable to deal in the language of the commercial world (Cf. Luke 19:13). Furthermore, in commanding the slaves to trade, Luke's nobleman is much more specific than Matthew's businessman (there one must conjecture as to how the slaves employed their trust), and the nobleman further reveals his objective--to ascertain the managerial ability of his slaves. Exactly because a mina was of such little worth for entering into business would the commercial acumen of the slaves be all the more severely tested.

Textually, despite the better manuscript evidence, *διεπραγματεύεσθε* is to be rendered with *τίς τί* and the singular as opposed to *τί* with the plural. The

¹³⁰ supra, pp. 62f.

latter reading suggests that a scribe, realizing that for a fact only three slaves and not "each one," i.e. all ten, reported, would have solved the apparent difficulty by changing the verb to a plural and making its reference general; "they" could refer to three or ten. The singular, then, is the more difficult reading, and *τῶν τῶν* shows that the three are representative of all the slaves. The results which they reported are typical for the entire group. v. 16.

ἰ ἀνὰ ἑοῦ—The slaves step forward to give account. Their language is fitting the procedure of a king's court. The first two slaves do not even refer to themselves but humbly state, "Thy mina has earned" ten or five minas, respectively (Luke 19:16,18).

Matthew, on the other hand, permits his slaves to speak in the first person (Cf. Matthew 25:20,22). But this only points up the peculiar character of each story, not that the slaves in Matthew were boastful, while the slaves in Luke were humble. For in Luke the man is a king who is unfamiliar with his servants and wished to determine their abilities. In Matthew the man is a businessman who already knew his slaves so well that he could divide his wealth among them according to each man's ability (Matthew 25:15). The familiarity and unfamiliarity, respectively, of the two masters with their slaves explains why the one group addresses their lord differently from the other.

δρακα—The first slave reports an increase of 1,000 per cent. In Matthew's parable the first slave increased his holdings by but 100 per cent. Again, this points up the slightly different character of the parables of the Talents and the Pounds. Matthew's parable of the Talents simply contrasts diligence with unfaithfulness (the first two slaves both returned an increase of 100 per cent, while the third slave returned no increase whatsoever). But Luke's parable of the Pounds not only contrasts diligence with unfaithfulness but even measures various grades of diligence as a comparison of the first two slaves indicates (Cf. Luke 19:16-17, 18-19). But this difference between the two parables, together with the others which have been pointed out, only serves to strengthen our postulate that the parables of the Talents and the Pounds, despite their basic similarity, are in many respects quite unique. It is inadequate, therefore, to attempt to explain these variations, which display such a high degree of originality, on the basis of redaction. Rather, these differences stem from Jesus himself who variously adapted a single story to two separate occasions.¹³¹

προσπράξατο—Arndt-Gingrich translates this verb with "earn in addition."¹³² So the first slave has eleven minas.

¹³¹ Supra, pp. 44ff.

¹³² Arndt-Gingrich, op. cit., p. 720.

v. 17.

εὖ γε--Textually, εὖ γε is to be read in place of εὖ. The latter suggests the influence of Matthew's text and would almost naturally be preferred, since εὖ γε is a hapax legomenon.¹³³ In meaning, however, both adverbs are the same--"excellent," "well done!"¹³⁴

ἀγαθὸς δοῦλε --In this parable the designation "good slave" seems to be parallel to what Luke also says of Joseph of Arimathea, namely that he was "a good . . . man," i.e. an upright man, a good citizen of the land (Luke 23:50). So the slave was a good slave, for he had performed his task with faithfulness, i.e. with diligence. The peculiar nuance of "good" in the sense of "single-hearted" does not seem to be so striking here as in Matthew.

πλετὸς --Luke, as Matthew, uses πλετὸς in the sense of "diligence" (Luke 12:42). In addition, Luke gives it an overtone of "honesty" (Cf. Luke 16:10ff.). Thus, in the parable of the Pounds the "faithful" slaves are those who have proven themselves to be diligent in work and trustworthy in character. W. Arndt comes close to this when he translates πλετὸς with "able and loyal."¹³⁵

¹³³Plummer, Luke, p. 440.

¹³⁴Arndt-Gingrich, op. cit., pp. 317, 319.

¹³⁵Arndt, op. cit., p. 392.

ἕκθε ἐξουσίαν ἔχων ἐπάνω δέκα πόλεων --The slave who had multiplied his mina tenfold is now made governor of ten cities. But even as the single mina, so the ten cities are not released to him as a possession, but as a trust.

In terms of Luke's allegory the interpretation of these ten cities presents somewhat of a problem. For while it is clear that the nobleman refers to Christ, the trip to the far land his Ascension, the slaves Christians, and the citizens who hate him the Jews, yet it is a real question whether or not the allegory should be pressed at this point. Some commentators do, with the result that they make this parable support something like a doctrine of ranks or orders of reward and glory in heaven.¹³⁶ In order, therefore, to determine to what extent these verses (Luke 19:16ff.) may be allegorized, and in order to understand the parable's story more accurately, we shall examine this section quite closely. The major points seem to be the following:

a. According to the text, the first slave, who multiplied his one mina by ten minas, is rewarded with the governorship of ten cities (Luke 19:17). The second slave, who multiplied his one mina by five minas, is rewarded with the governorship of five cities (Luke 19:19). Finally, the

¹³⁶Ibid., p. 393. Cf. also Geldenhuys, op. cit., p. 475.

third slave, who produces no increase, is charged with infidelity and must surrender his one mina to the first slave (Luke 19:22,24).

b. Luke's text nowhere states that the minas were distributed according to the ability of each slave. It emphasizes only that each slave received an equal amount. Accordingly, we may draw the following conclusions: (1) the presupposition of the text is that each slave had equal opportunity to multiply his mina, i.e. all could have turned in the same amount; (2) the amount of return which each slave produced, therefore, measures his fidelity; (3) contrariwise, it is out of harmony with the parable to attribute the varying returns of the slaves to varying abilities, for ability, as we just noted, is of no import in this parable.

c. The first slave, who returned ten minas, therefore, is the parable's example of complete fidelity. But the second slave, who returned five minas, already exhibits a type of half-heartedness. The third slave, who returned nothing but his original trust, is the parable's example of sloth.

d. Luke's parable, then, emphasizes varying degrees of fidelity in the face of equal opportunity. The sharpest distinction comes at the point of the third slave as opposed to the first two slaves, but a point of comparison is also drawn between the first and second slaves. These

differences are emphasized in the text by the various ways in which the master handles each man who gives account--he not only rewards the first slave but praises him as well (Luke 19:17); he does not praise the second slave but only rewards him (Luke 19:19); he neither praises nor rewards the third slave, but condemns him (Luke 19:22ff.).

e. Accordingly, the truth which the parable expresses at this point is the following: that even as the nobleman rewarded his slaves according to the varying degrees of their fidelity, so Jesus likewise will reward his Christians according to the varying degrees of their fidelity.

f. Such a teaching, however, does not substantiate any doctrine of ranks or orders of glory and reward in heaven. It states simply that Jesus expects full fidelity from his disciples, and that fidelity is rewarded proportionately. It specifies neither the "how" nor the "when" he rewards, merely "that" he rewards. Sound judgment, then, demands that any doctrine concerning ranks or orders of rewards be based on clear passages, not on an allegorical parable. In terms of the story in the parable, therefore, Luke 19:17ff. refer to the varying rewards which the first two slaves received--ten cities and five cities, respectively. Allegorically, these verses state that Christ rewards his followers according to the measure of their fidelity. But how he does this, or that this means that he will establish ranks of glory in heaven cannot be determined on the basis of this parable.

In comparison with Matthew's parable, Luke's version displays both a uniqueness and a similarity. In Matthew's text one finds the following: there is a careful consideration of each man's ability (Matthew 25:15); the first two slaves are set on an equal plane (Matthew 25:21,23); and a distinction is drawn only between absolute fidelity and sloth. But in Luke one finds these characteristics: there is no consideration of personal ability; no two slaves are placed on the same level; and there is a differentiation between complete fidelity, half-heartedness, and sloth. On the other hand, both parables are the same, in that they both exhort the disciples to absolute fidelity and teach that this fidelity will be rewarded.

vv. 18, 19.

ὁ δεύτερος . . . πέντε πόλεων ---The second slave, who increased his trust by 500 per cent, reports in the same manner as the first slave. In proportion to his increase, the second slave receives five cities. He is not praised by the master, however, and this indicates that he could have done better.¹³⁷

v. 20.

ὁ ἕτερος ---Arndt catches the full force of this word

¹³⁷Bruce, Gospels, p. 606. Cf. also Easton, op. cit., p. 281; Geldenhuys, op. cit., p. 478.

with the following paraphrase: "the one that was different."¹³⁸ Where the first two slaves had proven themselves diligent and trustworthy, this slave did not.

ἀποκλείειν ἐν σουδαρίῳ --While the first two slaves engaged in trade, this slave attempted to do no more than to preserve his entrusted mina by laying it away in a napkin. But in so doing, he displays an even greater indifference towards his trust than the third slave of Matthew's parable.¹³⁹ The third slave there at least observed the prescribed legal precautions for the safekeeping of money, something which this slave did not.¹⁴⁰

As far as their character is concerned, the third slaves of both parables are identical. For the great difference in the amounts which each slave had been entrusted (\$1,000 as compared with \$20) would certainly determine the lengths to which each man would go to protect the trust. So both slaves were slothful.

v. 21.

ἀνέργος --As in the case of Matthew's parable,¹⁴¹ this slave, too, sees but one course of action--to attempt to justify his own failure by slandering the character of

¹³⁸Arndt, op. cit., p. 393.

¹³⁹Jeremias, Gleichnisse, p. 53.

¹⁴⁰Supra, p. 61.

¹⁴¹Supra, pp. 71f.

his master. But where that slave described his lord as *εκλεπτός*, this slave is more cautious, since *ἀνετηρός* ("severe," "exacting")¹⁴² can, under circumstances, be used in a positive sense, something which fails *εκλεπτός* entirely.¹⁴³ But in the last analysis both slaves want to say the same thing--that their master is greedy. That this charge is false in both instances is reflected in each master's dealings with the first two slaves (Matthew 25:21,23); Luke 19:17,19).

ἰ) ἀρεῖς . . . ἔθικκς . . . θερίζεις . . .
 ἔβτελρας --In comparison with Matthew, Luke has inverted the order of this series and exchanged *εὐνάγων* . . . *δλεεκόρπλεως* in favor of *ἀρεῖς* . . .
 ἔθικκς . By so doing, Luke retains Matthew's picture of the harvest, but in place of the illustration of the threshing floor Luke substitutes a scene related to banking practice. "Picking up what you did not lay down," i.e. collecting interest on another person's deposit, is proverbial for "a rapacious individual."¹⁴⁴ This is the commentary on *ἀνετηρός*.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴²Arndt-Gingrich, op. cit., p. 121.

¹⁴³Ibid., pp. 121, 763.

¹⁴⁴Jeremias, Gleichnisse, p. 51. Cf. also Arndt, loc. cit.

¹⁴⁵Supra, pp. 105f.

v. 22.

ἐκ τοῦ στόματός σου κληῖ σε ---As

little as the master accepted the charges of the third slave in Matthew's parable, even less does the king stand for such accusations here. He seizes the very argument which the slave has raised and drives it ad absurdum.¹⁴⁶

πονηρὸς δούλες --The third slave represents a complete antithesis to the first slave, whom the king praised as ἀγαθὸς δούλες (Luke 19:17). Where that slave was diligent and trustworthy, this slave is wicked, i.e. of the opposite character (in Luke's language the third slave is as different from the first slave as "light" is from "darkness" (Luke 11:34), or as "good man" who produces "good" is different from an "evil man" who produces "evil" (Luke 6:45)). Thus, even as Matthew,¹⁴⁷ Luke wants to say that the behavior of the third slave should have been the exact opposite of what it was, i.e. he should have been diligent.

v. 23.

καὶ διὰ τί οὐκ ἐδωκάς . . . τράπεζαν

--This is the second of the two rhetorical questions which the king employs to convict the wicked slave on the basis of his own argument. Had the slave really feared the king

¹⁴⁶ Supra, p. 75.

¹⁴⁷ Supra, p. 74.

as he asserts, then he would have found some way to have carried on business with the mina, even if it were no more than delivering it to the bankers who could have earned interest for him.

τράπεζαν . . . τόκῳ --A full discussion of the implications of these terms as well as that of Palestinian banking practices may be found in Matthew's text on the parable of the Talents.¹⁴⁸

v. 24.

παραστῶσιν --In regard to the story of the parable, παραστῶσιν most probably refers to the king's attendants, courtiers, or bodyguard who stood around him as he held court.¹⁴⁹

Allegorically, R. Trench finds a reference in this term to the angels who stand about the throne of God ready to carry out his command.¹⁵⁰ We hesitate to do this, primarily because such allegorization lacks support in the clear passages of Luke.

ἄρατε . . . ὁτε τῷ τὰς δέκκα μνῆς --A number of commentators assert that v. 24 is out of character with the rest of the parable, since the giving

¹⁴⁸ Supra, p. 77.

¹⁴⁹ Major, op. cit., pp. 608f.

¹⁵⁰ Richard Chenevix Trench, Notes on the Parables of Our Lord (seventh revised edition; New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1855), p. 421.

of the one mina to a man who has already become governor of ten cities appears quite ridiculous.¹⁵¹ But this is only true if one considers the amounts involved rather than the significance of the king's action.

First of all, the transfer of the one mina should probably be understood as a symbolical transfer of interests. According to this, whatever cities or territory the first slave should have received are now placed under the control of one who is competent to govern them.

Furthermore, the importance of this action is not that the ten-mina slave received an additional gift, but that the one-mina slave loses all that he has. The parable is now reaching its climax. It has already described how the most faithful slave was rewarded. Its task now is to depict the fate of the slave who did nothing. So the flow of the story is ignored if one refers the attention of this action to the first slave rather than to the third.

v. 25.

κόπε, ἔχει δέκα μνᾶς --In harmony with
the interpretation of παρεστῶτες in v. 24, the
"they" of v. 25 would also refer to the bystanders, though
some commentators believe that it refers to the crowd about

¹⁵¹Major, op. cit., p. 608; Jeremias, Gleichnisse, p. 51; Bruce, Gospels, p. 607; Jülicher, op. cit., p. 493.

Jesus who interrupts him at this point.¹⁵² At any rate, it is an interjection, and some translators have correctly recognized this by enclosing v. 25. in a parenthesis.¹⁵³

Of greater importance is a proper understanding of the orientation of v. 25. As it stands in the parable, v. 25 must be considered in connection with v. 26. V. 26, in turn, specifies the principle according to which the entire action of the parable is to be clarified. The function of v. 25, then, is to heighten the contrast stated in v. 26--that he who has, receives more. But this orientation is misunderstood when commentaries use v. 25 to focus attention on the ten-mina slave, instead of viewing it as a preparation for what follows.¹⁵⁴

Textually, some commentators consider v. 25 to be secondary.¹⁵⁵ This question, however, can only be answered in the light of v. 26.¹⁵⁶

λέγω--If v. 25 is held to be an interjection on the part of the bystanders in the court of the king, then the

¹⁵² Bruce, Gospels, p. 607; Plummer, Luke, pp. 442f.

¹⁵³ RSV, Luke 19:25; Goodspeed, N. T., Luke 19:25.

¹⁵⁴ Jülicher, loc. cit.; Jeremias, Gleichnisse, p. 51.

¹⁵⁵ Easton, op. cit., p. 283; Bruce, Gospels, p. 607; Jülicher, op. cit., p. 491; G. G. Montefiore, editor, The Synoptic Gospels (second revised edition; London: Macmillan & Co., 1927), II, 566.

¹⁵⁶ supra, pp. 80ff.

king himself is the subject of λέγω . But if v. 25 refers to the crowd about Jesus, then λέγω falls out of the parable and refers to Jesus' direct address to the crowd.¹⁵⁷ This latter interpretation hardly suits the text, however, since v. 27 unmistakably returns to the situation of the parable's story.

παντὶ τῷ ἔχοντι δοθήσεται , ὑπὸ δὲ τοῦ μὴ ἔχοντος καὶ ὃ ἔχει ἀρθήσεται
 --V. 26 represents the climax of the parable. It explains the previous action of the story as follows: The "ones who had" were the slaves who earned ten and five minas, respectively. What they received was the governorship of ten and five cities, respectively. The "one who had not" was the slave who hid his mine in a napkin and earned nothing. What he lost, then, was what he had, namely, the one mine.

Many commentators hold v. 26 to be an isolated logion of Jesus which later tradition attached to this parable. For a discussion of this problem, we refer the reader to Matthew's parable of the Talents.¹⁵⁸

V. 26 further brings us to the tertium comparationis of Luke's parable of the Pounds. We state this as follows: Even as the nobleman in the story entrusted a certain amount of money to each of several slaves commanding them to trade

¹⁵⁷Plummer, Luke, p. 443.

¹⁵⁸Supra, pp. 80ff.

with it while he was absent, and even as he then returned from his journey and called them to account, rewarding those who were faithful in proportion to their diligence, condemning him who was unfaithful, and killing his enemies, so Jesus in like manner entrusts his wealth (work) to his Christians (church), commands them to perform their tasks during the time after his Ascension, and will return at the Final Day to call them to account, rewarding those who are faithful in proportion to their diligence, admonishing those who are unfaithful, and exercising punishment on his enemies. Just as the parable of the Talents, so this parable, too, exhorts Christians to absolute diligence.¹⁵⁹ It is part of Christian paraenesis, and it does not neglect to warn the unbelievers of punishment.

v. 27.

τοὺς ἔχθρους . . . ἀγρίστε . . .
καταφάγετε --v. 27 once more introduces the special material of the story which deals with the nobleman who sought a crown. It records in true oriental fashion the revenge which the new king exercises against those citizens who hated him and opposed his appeal for the throne.¹⁶⁰

Allegorically, in reference to v. 14, the enemies of the new king refer to the Jews, and when one remembers that

¹⁵⁹ Supra, pp. 73f.

¹⁶⁰ John Martin Creed, The Gospel according to St. Luke (London: Macmillan & Co., 1930), p. 235.

Luke's Gospel was written after the destruction of Jerusalem,¹⁶¹ it is doubtless that Luke also had this event in mind as he included this parable in his Gospel.¹⁶² Theologically, Meyer understands this expression "as shadowing forth the completeness of the condemnation to everlasting death at the final judgment."¹⁶³

Textually, the Bezae includes Matthew 25:30 at the end of the parable of the Pounds. This would seem to be an interpolation reflecting the influence of Matthew's text on Luke's text.

3. The Problems of the Sitz im Leben of the Parables of the Talents and the Pounds

Before we summarize our work, it is necessary to deal with the problem of the Sitz im Leben of the parables of the Talents and the Pounds. This has been the concern of especially C. H. Dodd and J. Jeremias. These two scholars recognize three such Sitz im Leben—one for each stage of development through which the parables have traveled.

¹⁶¹ Alfred Wikenhauser, Einleitung in das Neue Testament (dritte verbesserte und ergänzte Auflage; Freiburg: Herder, 1959), pp. 161f.

¹⁶² Plummer, Luke, p. 443; Major, op. cit., p. 609; Bruce, Parabolic Teaching, pp. 224f.

¹⁶³ Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Hand-book to the Gospels of Mark and Luke, edited by William P. Dickson, translated from the German by Robert Ernest Wallis (fifth revised edition; New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884), p. 514. Hereafter this work is referred to as Meyer, Luke.

According to C. H. Dodd, the parables of the Talents and the Pounds represent a single story. The original Sitz im Leben is to be found in Jesus' conversation with a typical Jew who was a member of the crowds which followed after him, i.e.

the type of pious Jew who comes in for so much criticism in the Gospels. He seeks personal security in a meticulous observance of the Law. . . . Meanwhile, by a policy of selfish exclusiveness, he makes the religion of Israel barren. Simple folk, publicans and sinners, Gentiles, have no benefit from the Pharisaic observance of the Law, and God has no interest on His capital.¹⁶⁴

Thus, concludes Dodd, "The parable . . . was intended to lead such persons to see their conduct in its true light. They are not giving God His own; they are defrauding Him."¹⁶⁵

The second stage of development, according to Dodd, comes when

the early Church makes use of the parable for paraenetic purposes, applying it as an illustration of the maxim, "To him that hath shall be given." It is at this stage that the form of the parable underlying Matthew and Luke was fixed in tradition.¹⁶⁶

Finally, the third stage of development, as Dodd outlines it, is when "the 'paraenetic' motive is superseded or supplemented by the 'eschatological' interest."¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴Dodd, op. cit., p. 151.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 151f.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., p. 152.

¹⁶⁷Ibid., p. 153.

Matthew reflects this in the position he gives the parable, and Luke does so through his introduction (Luke 19:11).

This three-stage development formulated by Dodd is supported by Jeremias. The one difference, however, is that the latter prefers to understand the original Sitz im Leben in terms of Jesus' proclamation to the elders of Israel, especially the "scribes."¹⁶⁸ Explained in these terms, the original parable would be interpreted as follows:

Grosses ist ihnen Anvertraut: Gottes Wort. Aber wie die Knechte im Gleichnis werden sie in Bälde Rechenschaft ablegen müssen, wie sie das anvertraute Gut verwendet haben: ob sie es nach Gottes Willen genutzt haben oder ob sie, dem dritten Knechte gleich, durch Selbstsucht und leichtfertige Missachtung der Gabe Gottes verleitet, das Wort Gottes um seine Wirkung gebracht haben.¹⁶⁹

Dodd and Jeremias, then, agree in a three-stage development of a single, original parable whereby each one finds a life-situation to correspond with each step in the tradition's growth. An examination of this scheme, however, leads us to the conclusion that such a pattern is at best a hypothetical construction. The proof for this can most easily be demonstrated by an analysis of three of the principles on which the foregoing theories rests. These principles are the following:

a. Dodd and Jeremias assume that the original parable, as Jesus spoke it, is to be reconstructed on the basis of

¹⁶⁸Jeremias, Gleichnisse, p. 53.

¹⁶⁹Ibid., p. 54.

those traits which the parables of the Talents and the Pounds have in common. Accordingly, they develop an original story and then attempt to fit it into a life situation which they believe is in harmony with what they know of the times of Jesus.¹⁷⁰

b. They further assume that any deviations which these two texts contain are to be traced to the hand of a redactor. For example, Matthew 25:21,23--"enter into the joy of your lord"--and Matthew 25:30--"throw the worthless slave into the darkness outside"--are Christological "additions" which stem from Matthew because Luke's text has no corresponding counterparts.¹⁷¹ Likewise, Luke's second story of the nobleman who seeks a crown is also redactionary editing, because these same verses fail in Matthew.¹⁷²

c. Finally, Dodd and Jeremias assume that it is common in the history of the synoptic tradition that logia of Jesus were often inserted into a context in which they were not original. So Matthew 25:30 and Luke 19:26 are secondary--a logion interpolation.¹⁷³

An analysis of these views leads us to raise the following considerations:

¹⁷⁰ Supra, pp. 114f.

¹⁷¹ Jeremias, Gleichnisse, p. 52.

¹⁷² Ibid., pp. 50f.

¹⁷³ Ibid., p. 54.

a. In the first place, these principles involve a high incidence of conjecture. For it is impossible to ever establish their accuracy or validity. It is impossible to compare the alleged original story which these principles postulate against the original story as it actually was told, since we nowhere possess that first narrative. We have it only as it reflects itself through the parables of the Talents and the Pounds. But if the accuracy of these principles cannot be demonstrated, then certainly the results they derive can be no more than hypothetical. Therefore, the scheme which Dodd and Jeremias set up is at best a hypothetical construction.

b. Dodd and Jeremias, by attempting to tell us exactly how Jesus related the original story, have made principles based on conjecture the norm by which one determines what Jesus could or could not have said. But one can hardly assert that Jesus restricted his behavior and speech to any set pattern which our principles can accurately determine. Consequently, this means that we have no absolute method for distinguishing between later redaction and original tradition. Once again, therefore, the construction of Dodd and Jeremias is at best hypothetical.

c. Furthermore, these principles contradict themselves. For according to principle "a" Matthew 25:30 and Luke 19:26, statements which Matthew and Luke share in almost identical fashion, must be judged to have been a

genuine part of the original story. According to principle "c" however, these verses are to be judged as secondary--a logion added in the course of the tradition. Depending, then, upon the interaction of principles "a" and "c" the whole second stage of development postulated by Dodd and Jeremias could either be established or repudiated. But this very fact reflects once more how hypothetical this three-stage development is.

d. Last, the Sitz im Leben which Dodd and Jeremias finally derive for the original story does not even flow out of the principles by which they establish the development of the text. It stems, rather, from their respective views of the situation of Jesus. Thus, Dodd, in looking at the reconstructed, original story through the eyes of the Old Testament, believes that it was spoken to the ordinary, pious Jew.¹⁷⁴ Jeremias, out of other considerations, says that the first Sitz im Leben was Jesus' attack on the leaders of the Jews, especially the scribes.¹⁷⁵ But these different views, in turn, demonstrate that personal presupposition, not the text itself, have made the final decision about the original Sitz im Leben.

In view of these four considerations, we are justified in making the following observations in regard to the Sitz

¹⁷⁴Supra, p. 114.

¹⁷⁵Supra, pp. 114f.

in Leben which our parables have served:

a. Exegetically, one can distinguish with certainty between only two Sitz im Leben--that from the time of Jesus and that from the time of the evangelists. Anything beyond this is largely speculative. That we are justified in handling these Sitz im Leben is apparent from the fact that these parables stem from Jesus, on the one hand, and that they have been incorporated by the evangelists into their respective Gospels, on the other.

b. When we consider the texts of these parables,¹⁷⁶ the many variations between the two stories suggests that Jesus spoke them in two different situations on two different occasions. Their fundamental relatedness, however, leads one to conclude that in each situation Jesus variously adapted a single, original Jewish story to suit his own purposes. But beyond this it is difficult to conclude anything regarding the Sitz im Leben which these parables served in the life of Jesus.

c. Concerning the Sitz im Leben of these parables in the Gospels, both Matthew and Luke interpreted that version of the story which he received in both an eschatological and allegorical manner. This is seen, on the one hand, from the context in which the evangelist placed his parable (Matthew), or by the way in which he indicates that it

¹⁷⁶Supra, pp. 44f.

should be interpreted (Luke 19:11).

With certainty, therefore, we may say no more than the following about the development of these parables: First, there was the original Jewish story which we can reconstruct with more or less accuracy by comparing the texts of Matthew and Luke. In regard to this story's Sitz im Leben in the Jewish tradition we can make certain observations, as we shall in our closing remarks, but in the last analysis we can only conjecture. Next followed the adoption and adaptation of this Jewish story by Jesus on two different occasions under different circumstances. Outside of what Matthew and Luke report about this Sitz im Leben (Matthew--Mount of Olives to the disciples; Luke--before Jerusalem to the crowds), we have no independent way of investigating these circumstances. In the third place, we have the Sitz im Leben of the evangelists where they record these parables in their Gospels as we have them, and where they interpret them eschatologically and allegorically. Of any other stage of development which may have existed between Jesus and the evangelists we can say nothing with certainty.

CHAPTER V

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PARABLES OF THE TALENTS AND THE POUNDS

In view of the preceding work, we are now in a position to attempt to answer the question posed at the beginning of this paper--what is the relationship between the parable of the Talents in St. Matthew and the parable of the Pounds in St. Luke? This relationship may be formulated under the following headings:

1. Both parables share a common foundation--the story of the master who proves the fidelity of his slaves.

As nearly as we can tell, this story told of a wealthy man, who, in going on a long journey, entrusted his slaves with a certain portion of his wealth. He allowed them to use their trust as they saw fit, but upon his return, he demanded that they give an account of their action. In giving account, the first two slaves presented their master with a return and thus proved that they had been diligent and faithful in furthering his interests. The third slave, on the other hand, had done nothing and could present no return. He sought to excuse himself, but on the basis of his own arguments the master proved that he had been indolent and unfaithful. The result was that the master rewarded the first two slaves but punished the third by depriving him of the trust he had neglected. The point of

the story rested with the contrast between the first two slaves as compared with the third, and the moral was a call to diligence and faithfulness by exhorting the hearers not to be like the third slave.

It is difficult to tell, of course, but it seems likely that this original story may have been of Jewish origin.¹ Some of our reasons for arriving at this conclusion are the following: (a) in general, the legal relationships and the banking practices which both parables presuppose harmonize with the business customs of Palestine; (b) more specifically, the practice of saving money by hiding it in the earth or in some type of bag was a familiar practice among the Jews; (c) furthermore, the cordial relationship between master and slaves, especially the exceptional confidence which the lord placed in his servants, on the whole (though not exclusively) corresponds to the conditions of Palestinian slavery somewhat better than those which prevailed in most of the other lands of the Roman empire; (d) last, some of the most important words and expressions of the original story, such as "calling to account," "lord" (κύριος), "good" (ἀγαθός), and "wicked" (πονηρός), are words and expressions steeped

¹B. T. D. Smith, though somewhat more timidly, also hints that this might be the case. B. T. D. Smith, The Parables of the Synoptic Gospels (Cambridge: The University Press, 1937), pp. 163f.

in Jewish religion and tradition; as such, they would be especially suited for a Jewish audience and would have enriched the story with a deeper dimension. For at least these reasons, therefore, it is justifiable to assume that the original story was of Jewish origin.

2. Despite the similarity of a common story, however, each parable displays a distinct individuality.

This can be seen most clearly when one takes note of the differences between these two parables. The most obvious difference is that Luke's parable does not hold to the pattern of the original story so closely as does Matthew's. Rather, Luke presents a fusion of two stories --that of the master and his slaves, together with that of the nobleman who gains a crown. In this fusion, however, the latter story is distinctly subordinate to the former.

In addition, there are numerous minute differences such as the following: Luke presents an introduction which Matthew does not; in Matthew the master is a businessman, in Luke he is a nobleman; in Matthew he has three slaves, in Luke he has at least ten; in Matthew he distributes talents, in Luke he distributes minas; in Matthew the third slave digs a hole in the earth, in Luke he wraps the mina in a napkin; in Matthew both of the first two slaves increase their trust by 100 per cent, in Luke the ratio of increase between these same two slaves is 1,000 per cent to 500 per cent; in Matthew the faithful slaves

enter into the joy of their lord, in Luke they are made governors of cities; in Matthew the third slave argues with two pictures from the harvest, in Luke he uses one picture from the harvest and one banking illustration; in Matthew there is no mention made of bystanders, in Luke the king has attendants; in Matthew the slave is cast into outer darkness, in Luke it seems as if he only loses his trust, but there is the further slaughtering of the contrary citizens. In the face of all of these differences, then, it is impossible to deny the individuality of each of these parables.

3. This tension between similarity and dissimilarity suggests that Jesus told the same basic story on two different occasions, each time adapting it, adding to it, or changing it in order to serve the particular situation. This explains why we have the two versions as they are.

The strength of this position becomes clear when one considers its alternatives. For if we reject this explanation, then either we are going to have to assert that the parables of the Talents and the Pounds represent a single parable of Jesus which in the course of the tradition was so radically redacted in two different directions that it finally became possible for the separate versions of Matthew and Luke to arise, or we are going to have to assert that the versions of Matthew and Luke are two completely separate parables which stand in no particular relationship to each other.

But both of these alternatives fail. The first one fails because the demand simply overextends itself to claim that such extensive variations are due to the same parable traveling through the processes of redaction. For, as nearly as we can tell, nowhere else in the synoptics can one find a similar example where common material can be demonstrated to have been so thoroughly re-edited. Then, too, if Matthew and Luke themselves are not responsible for these diversions, as Jeremias asserts, then this redaction must have taken place before the composition of these Gospels. But then it becomes even more difficult to explain; first, because of the close proximity of the material to its original sources, and second, because it was most probably the rigid, Jewish laws of transmission which controlled the development of the early Christian tradition. Consequently, the first alternative must be rejected.

The second alternative also fails. For the assumption that the Talents and the Pounds are two, completely different parables ignores the fact that they demonstrate a very particular relationship to each other, namely, that in regard to the outline and the tertium comparationis they are essentially the same. The strong similarities of both parables, then, renders this second explanation inadequate.

Our conclusion, then, stands. In view of the tension between these two parables, both in terms of their similarities and differences, it is most logical to assume that Jesus

told the same basic story on two separate occasions, adapting it differently each time.

4. Because each evangelist transmits a different version of the same basic story, these two parables could hardly stem from a single Q pericope, but must be traced to the sources M and L, respectively.

In Huck's Synopsis,² the parables of the Pounds and the Talents are placed side by side. This tends to give the impression that they represent common material taken from Q. But this is impossible, since, as we have already pointed out, the similarity of these two parables is not to be explained in terms of a single Q parable which was redacted by Matthew and Luke, but it is to be explained in terms of an original Jewish story which Jesus varied on two different occasions. Matthew and Luke, then, each present one of these versions, and each version, in turn, can only be attributed to M and L, respectively.

5. In regard to their content, both parables are eschatological parables in the narrower sense of the term, i.e. they both relate to the Final Judgment and the Second Coming of Christ.

This occurs, however, within the theological structure

²Albert Huck, Synopsis of the First Three Gospels, revised by Hans Lietzmann, prepared for English by F. L. Cross (ninth edition; New York: American Bible Society, 1954), pp. 152f.

of two quite differently oriented Gospels. Matthew writes his Gospel from the perspective of eschatology, and he distinguishes between that which is realized and that which is future. In simple terms, this means that the eschaton has already come, for it was ushered in with the earthly appearance of Jesus of Nazareth; it also means, however, that the eschaton is a future reality, for the Final Judgment is still to be awaited. So Matthew's Gospel stands in a tension. It teaches that the end is here, but that the end of the end is not.

Luke, on the other hand, writes from a point of view which depicts history much in the form of a line. According to his scheme, though a new age certainly did dawn in the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth, nevertheless, this is not the eschaton. Rather, the eschaton is to be identified exclusively with the Second Coming of Christ and the Final Day of Judgment. Accordingly, Luke's eschatological consciousness takes on a narrower perspective than that of Matthew. Borrowing Matthew's terminology, Luke's eschatology refers only to the "end of the end."

At the point of the parables of the Talents and the Pounds, however, the perspectives of both evangelists meet. For the parable of the Talents refers to futurist eschatology, i.e. the Second Coming of Christ, exactly as the parable of the Pounds. Thus, despite the divergent orientation of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke in wider circumference,

in respect to the parables of the Talents and the Pounds, both evangelists stand on the same spot.

6. Furthermore, both parables are allegorical parables, for each evangelist attributes a significance to the characters and events of his story which stands beyond their literal meaning.

This is undeniable, since Matthew proves it by means of his context (Matthew 24-25) and Luke by means of the very text itself (Luke 19:11). In greater detail, this means that the businessman in Matthew and the nobleman in Luke represent Christ, that his journey to a far-off land refers to his Ascension into heaven, that his return refers to the Second Coming, that the slaves refer to Christians, that the enemies in Luke refer to the unbelieving Jews, that the entrusted wealth is the work of the church, that the calling to account is the Final Judgment, that the blessings refer to heaven, and that the punishments refer to damnation. In all of these instances, the evangelists ascribe an allegorical interpretation to the literal story of these parables.

On the other hand, while both parables are unmistakably allegorical, it is necessary not to force them in this direction. It is an error to make Luke's parable prove a doctrine of ranks of rewards or orders of glory in heaven on the basis that one slave receives ten cities while the other receives but five, or to force the money of the

parables--the talents and the minas--with a precise meaning, or to use the instance of the bankers to prove that Christians literally are to do business for the church. Such interpretations as these enjoy neither the support of the "clear" passages of these Gospels, nor are they suggested by the parables themselves or their contexts. Sound judgment, then, demands that the exegete does not go further in his allegorizing than the texts themselves indicate.

7. Both parables also serve Christian paraenesis--they exhort Christians to absolute diligence in the tasks of the Savior.

The strength of this assertion rests on a comparison of the tertium comparationis of each parable. These two statements differ somewhat in their respective wordings, but essentially they both state the same truth--that even as the master in the story upon his return called his slaves to account whereby their diligence or their unfaithfulness was proved, so Christ, too, at the time of his Second Coming, will call Christians to account, and their diligence or unfaithfulness will be proved. The major emphasis of both parables, then, lies in the contrast between the first two slaves as opposed to the third slave. The call they send out is, "Christians, be diligent in the tasks of the Savior! Don't be like the third slave!"

But such an imperative must be classified with Christian paraenesis, in the sense that it refers to

Christian teaching (works) in contrast to the proclamation of saving Grace. For to Christians, who already stand in Grace, this imperative is a dynamic call to discipleship. It is the necessary "other half" of the Grace they have already received, as is demonstrated in the following statement: You are my disciples (Grace); therefore, be my disciples (works)!. To anyone outside of Grace, however, this same call becomes no more than hallow moralism.

That this distinction must be emphasized is clearly pointed out by our texts. According to Matthew, Jesus spoke the parable of the Talents exclusively to the disciples; according to Luke, Jesus spoke the parable of the Pounds primarily to the disciples (in Luke's case, the text seems to indicate that there were others present besides Jesus' disciples, for which reason the threat of Luke 19:27 is present. Hence, Luke's parable preaches law to the outsiders but presents a Gospel imperative to the disciples). Thus, both evangelists, who record the same call to diligence in the tasks of the Savior, directed it to those who already stood in Grace. This imperative, then, is a Gospel imperative, and it is to be classified under Christian paraenesis.

8. Finally, the examination of these parables allows us both to appreciate the progress of present day parable exegesis as well as to consider its principal danger.

It is impossible to undertake a serious study of the

parables today without at once appreciating the notable contributions which several of the great scholars have made in this field. A. Jülicher achieved a distinct victory for parable exegesis when he broke it from the shackles of the traditional allegorical method of interpretation. C. H. Dodd, too, rendered a decisive contribution when he emphasized first, that exegetes must take cognizance of the various Sitz im Leben which each parable has served, and second, that it was not general moralities which the parables intended to preach, but the mission and message of Jesus. Finally, J. Jeremias also has advanced this field, and in the following ways: he completed what Dodd had only begun by examining all of the parables instead of a select few; he searched for the full message of Jesus in place of the single doctrine of realized eschatology; and he demonstrated the importance of distinguishing between tradition and redaction within the parable pericopes by drawing up his several laws of redaction. All of these contributions have opened new horizons for parable exegesis, and the fresh attention which the parables have once again received prove this fact.

At the same time, these very contributions have also rendered parable exegesis vulnerable to at least one major danger--that of speculation and fabrication. For when a scholar's work reveals that he assumes that one can distinguish absolutely within the text between tradition and

redaction, or when scholars begin to formulate absolute descriptions of the situation in which Jesus told a parable, or when a scholar deals with the Gospels in such a way that he interprets them directly and solely out of the time of the evangelist, or, above all, when all of this preceding type of work ultimately rests on the ability of the individual to work with an almost perfect degree of accuracy behind the text (something which is at once impossible by reason of the subjective nature of such work), then one sees parable exegesis running the real danger of entering into pure speculation and fabrication. Working behind the text is both necessary and valuable. But when the scholar does this, he must realize that he is no longer working with certainties, but with variables.

The recent contributions to parable exegesis, therefore, are not in the least minimal; but they have also made unwarranted subjectivity a real threat.

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