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Major Trends in Parable Interpretation

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CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY

Major Trends in Parable Interpretation

JACK DEAN KINGSBURY

**The Sense of Church History in Representative
Missouri Synod Theology**

DAVID W. LOTZ

**A Consideration of the Meaning of Prayer
in the Life of Martin Luther**

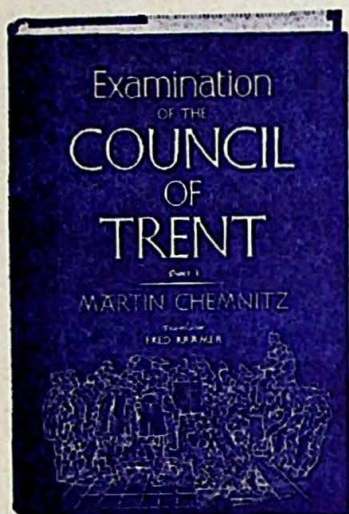
SISTER DEANNA MARIE CARR, B. V. M.

Homiletics

Vol. XLII

October

Number 9



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Major Trends in Parable Interpretation

JACK DEAN KINGSBURY

The author is assistant professor of New Testament at Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.

THE AUTHOR TRACES AND DESCRIBES THE HISTORY OF THE INTERPRETATION OF Jesus' parables from the epoch-making work of Adolf Jülicher in the late 19th century to the present.

If one man's estimate is any measure of the situation, not every preacher is enthusiastic about laying a parable at the basis of Sunday morning's sermon. A principal reason for being less than enamored of the parables is simply methodological in nature. The preacher is not altogether certain as to how to treat the parable, because each time he attempts to "break it down" in an effort to attach contemporary significance to the individual parts of the story, the voice of his seminary professor suddenly begins to reverberate through the recesses of his mind: "Whatever you do, don't allegorize the parables!"

The man who laid down the dictum not to allegorize parables, and on whose authority the seminary professor had dared to speak with such vehemence, was an immensely learned German theologian by the name of Adolf Jülicher. By the compelling force of his scholarship, complemented as it was by the considerable weight of his tomes (two volumes totaling 971 pages!),¹ Jülicher almost singlehandedly inaugurated a new era in the history of parable inter-

pretation. It is to the telling of this story that the following pages are largely devoted, for characteristic of the last eight decades of parable interpretation is the acceptance, modification, or supplementation of his famous parable theory.

THE PARABLE THEORY OF JÜLICHER

The origin of the parable theory of Jülicher can be traced to his antipathy toward the allegorical method of interpretation as it had been applied by theologians to the parabolic speech of Jesus throughout the history of the church. Still today the student of Scripture cannot read the 119 pages Jülicher devotes to the "History of the Interpretation of the Parabolic Speech of Jesus"² without being duly impressed by what he, too, must judge to be the methodical abuse to which the parabolic speech of Jesus was subjected by successive generations of Biblical experts. With resolute purpose, Jülicher shows how century after century these experts were disposed to ignore the unambiguous meaning of the parabolic speech of Jesus in order to treat its constituent units as so many miniature vaults wherein were stored all manner of divine mystery and from

¹ A. Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu* (Nachdruck der Ausgabe Tübingen 1910; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963), I (1888), II (1899).

² *Ibid.*, I, chap. 6.

which one could legitimately remove all manner of dogmatic truth. To cite but one example, Jülicher informs us that Tertullian, in his interpretation of the parable of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-32), baldly declares that the father is to be understood as God, the prodigal son as natural man, the property he squandered as his innate knowledge of God, the citizen of the far country to whom he hired himself out as the prince of this world, the swine as demons, and the robe he received from his father upon his return home as the blessed condition Adam lost as a result of his transgression in Eden.³ Jülicher reports equally amusing exegetical sophistries of such august scholars as Origen and Jerome.⁴

But lest one become too hilarious over the early fathers, Jülicher quickly points out that even when a new exegetical spirit began to stir at the time of the Reformation, owing to the renaissance of classical learning,⁵ the allegorical method of interpretation, except for the work of Calvin and Bucer,⁶ continued to hold sway among theologians.⁷ Indeed, where it was pressed into the service of polemics and controversy, it was cultivated with unsurpassed intensity.⁸ Not until the establishment of the historical approach to Scripture in the 19th century does a real turn for the better take place as far as parable interpretation is concerned.⁹ Still, a complete scholarly break with the allegorical method was

achieved only in the latter half of the 19th century, when Bernhard Weiss succeeded in advancing his conception of parabolic speech;¹⁰ however, also Weiss, chides Jülicher, did not see fit to relinquish the view that Jesus' use of parabolic speech resulted in the blinding of men as well as the enlightening of them.¹¹ Accordingly, Jülicher concludes his survey of the history of the parabolic speech of Jesus in the conviction that it had only served to confirm what he had suspected at the outset, namely, that with the notable exception of the work of five men (Bucer, Calvin, Maldonatus, von Koetsveld, and B. Weiss), this history had stood under the fateful spell of the allegorical method of interpretation and that at no time in virtually two millenia had anyone yet propounded a fully cogent theory with regard to the nature and purpose of the parabolic speech of Jesus.¹²

Against this background Jülicher proceeds to formulate his own theory about the parabolic speech of Jesus. Before doing so, however, he attempts to come to grips with the question of the "genuineness" (*Echtheit*) of this speech,¹³ and expresses the conviction that although some 40 or 50 years had elapsed between the time at which Jesus had first uttered it and the time at which the evangelists had incorporated it into their gospels, scholars were nevertheless quite capable of recovering it in its pristine form.¹⁴

Jülicher next concentrates on what he regards as the burden of his study: elu-

³ Ibid., p. 219.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 223, 243.

⁵ Ibid., p. 252.

⁶ Ibid., p. 258.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 252—86.

⁸ See, for example, Jülicher's remarks concerning John Gerhard, *ibid.*, p. 277.

⁹ Ibid., p. 306.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 317 f.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 319.

¹² Ibid., pp. 317 f., 320.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 1—24.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 11 f., 18, 24.

cidating the nature of parabolic speech.¹⁵ He is of the opinion that this can be done most effectively by analyzing its constituent categories. Consequently, fundamental to the understanding of Jülicher's parabolic theory is some grasp of the categories of parabolic speech he establishes.

The two basic categories Jülicher identifies are the simile, or comparison (*Vergleichung*), and the metaphor. The difference between the two is that whereas in the case of the simile¹⁶ the reality (*Sache*) and the word picture (*Bild*) to be compared are placed side by side so that it is obvious at once in what way the one is similar to the other, in the case of the metaphor¹⁷ direct reference is made only to the word picture. Thus the Homeric line, "A lion rushed on," is an example of metaphor; but the same line becomes a simile if it is said, "Achilles rushed on like a lion."

Though it appears to the casual observer that the simile and the metaphor are closely related forms of speech, Jülicher is adamant in his insistence that the nature of the metaphor is fundamentally different from that of the simile.¹⁸ To be sure, he does acknowledge that both have at least one feature in common, namely, the *homoion*, for in both one thing is indeed held to be "like" another.¹⁹ Apart from this, however, Jülicher contends that the antithesis (*Gegensätzlichkeit*) between the two is absolute: the simile always comprises literal (*eigentlich*) speech and is self-explanatory, whereas the metaphor

always comprises nonliteral (*uneigentlich*) speech and is enigmatic.²⁰

The remaining categories of parabolic speech Jülicher views as simple extensions of either the simile or the metaphor. The extension of the metaphor is the allegory.²¹ Extensions of the simile are the similitude (*Gleichnis*),²² the parable proper (*Parabel*),²³ and the example-story (*Beispielerszählung*)²⁴ Characteristic of the similitude and the parable proper is the fact that they possess a picture-half (*Bildhälfte*) and a reality-half (*Sachhälfte*), which are joined together by a comparative particle, usually *bōs* ("as," "like"). The function of this comparative particle is to challenge the hearer to locate within the parabolic unit its *tertium comparationis* (point of comparison), that is to say, that one point at which the two "halves" coincide. To illustrate, it is a similitude the psalmist has coined when he says (42:1), "As a hart longs for flowing streams [picture-half], so [comparative particle] longs my soul for thee, O God [reality-half]," for clearly the relationship of the hart longing for streams is comparable to the relationship of the soul longing for God.

From the structure of the parabolic speech of Jesus, continues Jülicher, arises its purpose. Since the comparative particle in any parabolic unit serves to challenge the hearer to locate within the unit its point of comparison, it becomes evident that each parabolic unit is contrived to impel the hearer to form a judgment. This, in turn, shows that the underlying inten-

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, chap. 2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 52—58.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 58—69, 80.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 69 f., 73 f., 80.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 92—98, 101.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 112 f.

tion of parabolic speech is that of proving, or convincing.²⁵ Because no more than one thing can at any given time be proved, it should be obvious that only one thought can legitimately be derived from a single parabolic unit.²⁶ Accordingly, with regard to the parabolic speech of Jesus, form and function can be seen to be wholly apposite.

Having now completed the literary task of defining the nature and purpose of parabolic speech, Jülicher culminates his study in the attempt to make his literary analysis historically and theologically fruitful for gaining insight into the person and ministry of Jesus.²⁷ On the basis of his investigations, Jülicher concludes that Jesus was preeminently a teacher.²⁸ Central to His message was the theme of the kingdom of God.²⁹ This kingdom, imperceptibly growing, was construed by Jesus as a spiritual fellowship of brothers and sisters in God.³⁰ In order to proclaim the kingdom, Jesus seized on the art of speaking in parables.³¹ Still, He employed such speech, not to perplex people, but to enlighten them; hence, unlike the contemporary rabbis, Jesus made no use whatsoever of allegory.³² In short, what history reveals of Jesus is that He was a teacher who utilized parabolic speech to open the eyes of men to the kingdom of God and to the moral and religious laws that prevail therein.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 70—73, 96, 105, 113 f.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 75, 80, 98, 105, 111, 114, 117, 163.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 148—53.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 149, 155—63.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 149.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 149, 152.

³² Ibid., pp. 39—42, 52—68, 165.

To recapitulate, because Jülicher held that the allegorical approach to parabolic speech as it had been practiced throughout the centuries defied adequate controls and readily lent itself to the caprice of the individual exegetes, he drafted a parable theory according to which the simile, to the exclusion of the metaphor, is to be regarded as the basic unit of Jesus' parabolic speech. The upshot of this theory, when applied, is that the interpreter permits himself to identify only one point of contact between the picture-half and the reality-half in any of the several types of parabolic sayings or stories of Jesus, so that the meaning of each unit is best rendered in a single, general statement. As regards their nature, all of the parabolic units are considered to be self-explanatory, and as regards their function, they are said to impel the hearer to form a judgment about the moral and religious laws of the kingdom of God.

THE CRITIQUE OF JÜLICHER'S PARABLE THEORY

The advent of Jülicher's parable theory was hailed by New Testament scholars as an event of major proportions.³³ In point of fact, the success of this theory was virtually assured from the outset. Not only had it been formulated by one of the recognized representatives of the historical approach to theology, but it was itself its own best recommendation: a model of simplicity and precision that combined

³³ A striking example of this is the enthusiasm and complete fidelity with which the French Modernist Alfred Loisy propagated the parable theory of Jülicher in the first part of his book: "Les paraboles de l'Évangile," *Études évangéliques* (Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1902), pp. 1—121.

ease of application with the prospect of yielding significant results.

Nevertheless, the plaudits with which Jülicher's theory was received in no way exempted it from critical scrutiny. On the contrary, theologians of both liberal and conservative stripe, Roman Catholics as well as Protestants, subjected it to rigorous analysis for more than two decades, until the beginning of the First World War and, following that, the rise of New Testament form criticism. Among the Roman Catholics, scholars of note were L. Fonck (1902),³⁴ M. J. Lagrange (1909),³⁵ D. Buzy (1912),³⁶ and M. Meinertz (1916).³⁷ Of the Protestants, the most important men were J. Weiss (1891),³⁸ G. Heinrici (1899),³⁹ H. Weinel (1900),⁴⁰

C. A. Bugge (1903),⁴¹ P. Fiebig (1904, 1912),⁴² and O. Eissfeldt (1913).⁴³

As one can observe, the preceding lists conspicuously lack Anglo-American names. The reason is that while Continental theologians were vigorously engaged in debate over Jülicher's parable theory, the English-speaking world was noticeably content to ignore it, occupying itself instead with successive editions of the moral allegorizations that had been so artfully refined by such men as Archbishop Trench,⁴⁴ A. B. Bruce,⁴⁵ and M. Dods.⁴⁶ Perhaps the redeeming work during these years was the slender but excellent volume by L. E. Browne (1913).⁴⁷

No matter how harsh in tone, the critique that was directed against Jülicher's

³⁴ *Die Parabeln des Herrn*, 2d ed. (Innsbruck: Felizian Rauch, 1904).

³⁵ "La parabole en dehors de l'Évangile," *Revue Biblique*, 6 (1909), 198—212, 342—67; "Le but des paraboles d'après l'Évangile selon Saint Marc," *Revue Biblique*, 7 (1910), 5—35. Hereafter these two articles will be referred to, respectively, as "parabole" and "Saint Marc."

³⁶ *Introduction aux paraboles évangéliques* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1912). In the tradition of Lagrange and Buzy stands also the more recent study of M. Hermaniuk, *La parabole Évangélique* (Louvain: Bibliotheca Alfonsiana, 1947).

³⁷ *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*, 4th ed. (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1948).

³⁸ "Die Parabelrede bei Markus," *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*, 64 (1891), 289 to 321. Hereafter this article will be referred to as "Parabelrede."

³⁹ "Gleichnisse Jesu," *Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, ed. A. Hauck, 3d ed. (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1899), VI, 688—703.

⁴⁰ "Die Bildersprache Jesu in ihrer Bedeutung für die Erforschung seines inneren Lebens," *Festgruss Bernhard Stade*, ed. W. Diehl et al. (Giessen: J. Ricker'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1900), pp. 49—97; *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*, 3d ed. (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1910). Hereafter

these two works will be referred to, respectively, as "Bildersprache Jesu" and *Gleichnisse*.

⁴¹ *Die Haupt-Parabeln Jesu* (Giessen: J. Ricker'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1903).

⁴² *Altjüdische Gleichnisse und die Gleichnisse Jesu* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1904); *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu im Lichte der rabbinischen Gleichnisse des neustamentlichen Zeitalters* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1912). Hereafter these two works will be referred to, respectively, as *Altjüdische Gleichnisse* and *Gleichnisreden Jesu*.

⁴³ *Der Maschal im Alten Testament*, Vol. 24 of *Beihfte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* (Giessen: Alfred Topelmann, 1913).

⁴⁴ *Notes on the Parables of Our Lord*, reprint (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1953 [first published 1841]).

⁴⁵ *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, 4th rev. ed. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1914).

⁴⁶ *The Parables of Our Lord*, reprint (London: Hodder & Stoughton, I [1905], II [1894]). In the same vein as the parable interpretation of Trench, Bruce, and Dods is the later book by H. B. Swete, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London: Macmillan, 1920).

⁴⁷ *The Parables of the Gospels* (Cambridge: University Press, 1913).

parable theory was not calculated to overturn it. Indeed, those who took issue with Jülicher were the first to acknowledge that his great contribution to parable interpretation lay precisely in the fact that he had delivered the death knell to the allegorical method as a viable approach for dealing with the parabolic speech of Jesus.⁴⁸ In addition, the majority of these scholars also occupied a position similar to that of Jülicher in two important respects: in the first place, they concurred in his estimate of the genuineness of the parabolic speech of Jesus;⁴⁹ and second, with the notable exception of Johannes Weiss⁵⁰ and, for different reasons, the Catholic theologians, these scholars largely shared Jülicher's Liberal understanding of Jesus as a teacher who proclaimed the kingdom of God as a fellowship grounded on the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.⁵¹ Accordingly, owing to commonality of interest both theological and methodological, it was inevitable that, again, the critique of

Jülicher's parable theory should have been essentially positive in character.

Where Jülicher did elicit the disapprobation of his critics was in relation to his conception of the nature and purpose of the parabolic speech of Jesus. Concerning the purpose of this speech, the critics readily acknowledge that the element of persuasion is inherent in it and that it comes to the fore especially in the major categories (similitude, parable proper, example-story).⁵² What they dispute, however, is the rigid principle that this element must be defined according to the dictates of Aristotle in the singular sense of "proving." For, as Bugge asserts, if some parabolic units are in fact to be classified as argumentative, others are to be classified more particularly as illustrative (see Matt. 5:13 f.) or didactic (see Matt. 20:1-16).⁵³

Without doubt, the most sharply contested aspect of Jülicher's parable theory has to do with the nature of the parabolic speech of Jesus. The question is: Can Jülicher's claim be substantiated that in essence the simile-parable and the metaphor-allegory are mutually exclusive categories of speech, with the consequence that Jesus narrated only pure parables in the Aristotelian sense of the word? The critics of Jülicher think not, and to prove their case they appeal to classical authors,

⁴⁸ See, for example, the remarks to this effect made by Heinrici, p. 703; Bugge, pp. 9 f.; Fiebig, *Altjüdische Gleichnisse*, pp. 11, 75, 126, and *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, p. 120; Lagrange, "parabole," p. 200.

⁴⁹ See Heinrici, pp. 693 f.; Weinel, "Bildersprache Jesu," p. 65, and *Gleichnisse*, pp. 35 to 65; Bugge, pp. 79 ff.; Fiebig, *Altjüdische Gleichnisse*, pp. 75, 129 ff., and *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, p. 121.

⁵⁰ In *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes*, 2d ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1900), J. Weiss construed Jesus as an eschatological figure, thus paving the way for the ultimate overthrow of the Liberal view of the person and work of Jesus.

⁵¹ See, for example, Heinrici, pp. 695, 700; Weinel, "Bildersprache Jesu," pp. 57—60, 66 to 72, and *Gleichnisse*, pp. 65—69; Bugge, pp. 3, 44—55, 94—101; Fiebig, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, pp. 120 f.; and compare also Meinertz, pp. 17 f.

⁵² See Heinrici, pp. 689, 695; Weinel, *Gleichnisse*, pp. 19, 26, 30; Fonck, pp. 15, 30; Bugge, pp. 35, 60 f., 68; Fiebig, *Altjüdische Gleichnisse*, pp. 117, 136, 147, and *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, pp. 260 f.; Lagrange, "parabole," pp. 208, 210, 357, 360, 362, 364, and "Saint Marc," pp. 15—18; Meinertz, p. 29.

⁵³ Bugge, pp. 60—67. See also Lagrange, "parabole," pp. 207—11, 357 f., "Saint Marc," pp. 13, 15—18.

to the Old Testament, and to rabbinical literature.

From the standpoint of the classical authors, it is the Roman Catholic scholars Lagrange⁵⁴ and Buzy⁵⁵ who undertake to refute Jülicher. Through their treatment of the pertinent sources they demonstrate that Jülicher's assertion according to which the metaphor is "essentially" (*wesentlich*) different from the simile⁵⁶ is supported neither by Aristotle himself nor by the Latin rhetorician Quintilian.⁵⁷

From the standpoint of the Old Testament, of the apocrypha, and of the rabbis, it is above all Eissfeldt,⁵⁸ Bugge,⁵⁹ and Fiebig⁶⁰ who challenge Jülicher's understanding of the nature of parabolic speech. Of paramount importance is the cardinal principle Bugge and Fiebig lay down, namely, that in form and content the *mesalim*⁶¹ of the rabbis are the type of literature with which the parabolic speech of Jesus is most directly related, so that to comprehend best the nature of this speech one should look, not as Jülicher has done, to the rhetorical guidelines of Aristotle, but to the

rabbinic *mesalim* themselves.⁶² Moreover, while it is true, comments Fiebig, that some *mesalim* do fall into the category of either the pure parable or the pure allegory, the vast majority reveal themselves to be mixed forms, or, more specifically, allegorical parables.⁶³ Hence Jülicher's contention that Jesus narrated parables of a strictly "pure" variety is categorically to be rejected.⁶⁴

Closely associated with the debate over the nature of the parabolic speech of Jesus is one final issue that begs of consideration, namely, the question of the perspicuity of this speech. As indicated, Jülicher took the position that the simile-parable is altogether perspicuous but that the metaphor-allegory is dark and ambiguous.⁶⁵ Taking exception to this, the critics of Jülicher show that with regard to both the parable and the allegory the matter of perspicuity is always a relative thing. It is contingent on such imponderables as the artful composition of the unit,⁶⁶ the situation in which it is narrated,⁶⁷ and the subject matter the parabolic speech is bringing to expression. So it is, for ex-

⁵⁴ "Parabole," pp. 202—12.

⁵⁵ Buzy, pp. 170—82.

⁵⁶ Jülicher, I, 52.

⁵⁷ See Aristotle, *The "Art" of Rhetoric*, Eng. trans. by J. H. Freese in *The Loeb Classical Library*, ed. T. E. Page, reprinted ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), bk. III, 4 (pp. 366 f.); Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, Eng. trans. by H. E. Butler in *The Loeb Classical Library*, ed. T. E. Page, reprint (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), III, bk. VIII, vi, 47 (pp. 328 f.).

⁵⁸ Eissfeldt, pp. 27 f., 30 f., 37 ff., 41 ff.

⁵⁹ Bugge, pp. 19—36.

⁶⁰ *Altjüdische Gleichnisse*, pp. 114—24.

⁶¹ It is common knowledge that the Hebrew word *mašal* (pl. *mešalim*) has a far broader range of meaning than does the Greek word *parabolē*.

⁶² Bugge, pp. xi, 19 f.; Fiebig, *Altjüdische Gleichnisse*, pp. 12 f., 107, 115, and *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, pp. 121 f., 128, 220 f., 267—70. See also Lagrange, "parabole," pp. 363 f., 366 f.

⁶³ Fiebig, *Altjüdische Gleichnisse*, pp. 93 ff., 138 ff., 162 f., and *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, pp. 126 ff., 224—33.

⁶⁴ Fiebig, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, pp. 127 f.

⁶⁵ Jülicher, I, 56 ff., 64, 76, 81, 106, 118.

⁶⁶ See Heinrici, pp. 697 f.; Bugge, pp. 13 to 16, 32, 67—76, 86; Fiebig, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, pp. 252—59; Lagrange, "parabole," p. 205; Meinertz, pp. 29 ff.

⁶⁷ See Weinel, "Bildersprache Jesu," *passim*, and *Gleichnisse*, pp. 8, 19; Fonck, pp. 39 ff.; Bugge, pp. 18, 94 f.; Fiebig, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, pp. 262—65; Lagrange, "parabole," p. 205, and "Saint Marc," p. 17.

ample, that a metaphor that is transparent to the hearer must be judged to be every bit as lucid as any simile.⁶⁸ Consequently, while Jesus certainly could have employed metaphors and even allegories without their having occasioned any consternation whatsoever on the part of His hearers, the question of the perspicuity of His parabolic speech can ultimately be answered only in view of His hearers and of the purpose to which He put His parabolic speech. In sounding this note, the critics of Jülicher broach a topic that today still is the object of intense reflection.

In summary, though the debate evoked by the parable theory of Jülicher was waged with vigor, it was never colored by the desire to discredit it. The reason for this is apparent: Jülicher's contemporaries recognized only too well the utility of his theory for combatting an allegorical method that they, too, deplored. However, through their discussion of the nature and purpose of the parabolic speech of Jesus, the critics did provide a salutary corrective to Jülicher's stringent theory. If anywhere, it is here that they are to be credited with having made an enduring contribution to the field of parable interpretation.

THE LITERARY ANALYSIS OF THE FORM CRITICS

The Great War that suddenly burst over Europe in 1914 inflicting political and economic dislocation upon the nations also had its calamitous effect on the existing cultural institutions. In the religious

⁶⁸ Lagrange, "parabole," pp. 203 f.; Fiebig, *Altjüdische Gleichnisse*, pp. 99 f. See also Weinel, "Bildersprache Jesu," pp. 63 f.

sphere, the moral and intellectual shock among Continental theologians was so acute that it resulted in the demise of liberal theology. But to the extent that the hold of obsolete systems of thought was broken, the minds of men were freed for fresh approaches to pressing problems.

In the discipline of New Testament exegesis, one of the problems that was most pressing was the need for a more trenchant historical investigation of the formation of the traditions that lay at the basis of the gospels. In response to this need arose the method of form criticism, which Old Testament scholars had already been employing with profit for some two decades. For its part, however, New Testament form criticism did not emerge as the product of the coordinated efforts of any group of scholars. Instead, four men working independently of one another are commonly acknowledged to be its founders: Karl Ludwig Schmidt of Berlin (1919),⁶⁹ Martin Dibelius of Heidelberg (1919),⁷⁰ Rudolf Bultmann of Marburg (1921),⁷¹ and Martin Albertz of Breslau (1921).⁷²

As far as parable interpretation is concerned, the arrival of form criticism produced no new developments of any major

⁶⁹ *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu* (Berlin: Trowitzsch & Sohn, 1919).

⁷⁰ *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, 3d ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1959); Eng. trans. by B. L. Woolf, *From Tradition to Gospel* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935).

⁷¹ *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, 4th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958); Eng. trans. by J. Marsh, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963).

⁷² *Die synoptischen Streitgespräche; Ein Beitrag zur Formengeschichte des Urchristentums* (Berlin: Trowitzsch & Sohn, 1921).

importance. Indeed, it is noteworthy that of the four founders of form criticism, only Dibelius and Bultmann were at all disposed to give any special treatment to Jesus' parabolic speech. Even at this, their goal was not to interpret the respective units; instead, they attempted variously to classify them according to form, to record their structural and stylistic features, and to determine the *Sitz im Leben* in the early church they appear to have served.⁷³

Of aid to a more penetrating literary analysis of the parabolic speech of Jesus are Bultmann's observations covering its formal characteristics. He examines the introduction, the conclusions, and the body of the numerous parabolic units and gives a minute description of their multiplicity of traits.⁷⁴ It is in his compilation of this immense amount of literary detail that Bultmann's contribution to parable interpretation is to be recognized.

Accordingly, the significance of the founders of form criticism in relation to the field of parable interpretation is that their work possessed the character of a transition, consolidating past accomplishments and preparing the way for future developments. On the one hand, the form critics underlined the basic importance of the method and theory of Jülicher, even pursuing his efforts further by systematically cataloging the structural and stylistic traits of parabolic speech. On the other hand, by demonstrating with their literary analysis that there exists in the Gospel traditions a reciprocal relationship

⁷³ Dibelius, pp. 247—58 (Eng. trans., pp. 247—58); Bultmann, pp. 179—222 (Eng. trans. pp. 166—205).

⁷⁴ Bultmann, pp. 193—208 (Eng. trans., pp. 179—92).

between a pericope and any given *Sitz im Leben* it has served, they prepared the way for the next turn of events that proved decisive for parable interpretation.

THE HISTORICO-ESCHATOLOGICAL APPROACH OF DODD AND JEREMIAS

The English world of scholarship took relatively little notice of Jülicher's parable theory when it was first propounded and therefore did not actively participate in the ensuing debate it generated on the Continent. The same thing must also be said of the rise of form criticism; instead of occupying themselves with the new method, English-speaking scholars preferred to concentrate on the problems associated with the older source criticism.⁷⁵ In the decade of the thirties, however, this spirit of aloofness suddenly vanished. In 1931 A. T. Cadoux⁷⁶ of Glasgow published a book on the parables which methodologically paved the way for a new phase in the history of parable interpretation subsequently initiated by the great Oxford scholar C. H. Dodd (1935)⁷⁷ and his German contemporary Joachim Jeremias (1947).⁷⁸

Cadoux, Dodd, and Jeremias build on both Jülicher's work and that of the form critics. With Jülicher they categorically reject the allegorical method of interpre-

⁷⁵ Compare B. H. Streeter's classic volume on source criticism, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (London: Macmillan, 1924).

⁷⁶ *The Parables of Jesus* (London: James Clarke, 1931).

⁷⁷ *The Parables of the Kingdom*, rev. ed. (London: James Nisbet, 1961).

⁷⁸ *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*, 6th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962); Eng. trans. by S. H. Hooke, *The Parables of Jesus*, rev. ed. (London: SCM Press, 1963).

tation,⁷⁹ though they do give heed to the critics of Jülicher in that they do not regard the simile and the metaphor as altogether antithetic to each other;⁸⁰ moreover, they, like Jülicher, also insist that the interpreter should attempt to recover the individual units of Jesus' parabolic speech, to the extent that this is possible, in their pristine form.⁸¹ With the form critics, Cadoux, Dodd, and Jeremias recognize that at the basis of the Gospels lies an oral tradition, that the parabolic units were subject to change in the course of their transmission, and that it is the task of the interpreter to distinguish between tradition and redaction through application of the form-critical method.⁸²

At the same time, the program of Cadoux, Dodd, and Jeremias is distinctive in its own right. All three focus their attention on the time of Jesus in contrast to the time of the early church and the time of the evangelists,⁸³ and they investigate the parabolic speech of Jesus with two objectives in mind: their immediate goal is to reconstruct that particular historical situation in the ministry of Jesus in which He narrated any given parabolic

unit, and their ultimate goal is to interpret the parabolic speech of Jesus in the light of such historical situations.⁸⁴

In order to achieve these objectives, Cadoux, Dodd, and Jeremias are obliged to overcome a methodological problem, namely, precisely how is one to go about joining a parabolic unit with that historical setting in which Jesus first told it? To solve this problem, they develop two procedures.

The one procedure is that which Dodd advocates and is patterned after the constructive (form-critical) method of Dibelius.⁸⁵ According to it, the interpreter begins by orienting himself to the whole of the ministry and teaching of Jesus.⁸⁶ He then analyzes the respective parabolic units and relates each one to a specific situation in the ministry of Jesus.⁸⁷ The situation and the parabolic unit should be made to illuminate each other reciprocally, thus enabling the interpreter to ascertain the original meaning and application of the unit.⁸⁸

The second procedure is that followed by Cadoux and Jeremias, closely related to the analytical (form-critical) method of Bultmann.⁸⁹ In this case the interpreter begins, not with the total situation of Jesus' ministry but with the individual parabolic unit, analyzing it to determine its original point.⁹⁰ Once the point has been

⁷⁹ See Cadoux, pp. 7, 43—50, 58 f.; Dodd, pp. vii, 1—12; Jeremias, pp. 9, 14 f. (Eng. trans., pp. 12 f., 18 f.).

⁸⁰ See Cadoux, pp. 50 ff.; Dodd, p. 9; Jeremias, pp. 87 f. (Eng. trans., pp. 88 f.).

⁸¹ See Cadoux, chap. 4; Dodd, chaps. 4—6; Jeremias, Vorwort, pp. 9, 16 ff., chap. 2 (Eng. trans., Foreword, pp. 12, 19, 21 f., chap. 2).

⁸² See Cadoux, chaps. 2, 4; Dodd, pp. 14 to 18, 26, fn. 1, chaps. 4—6. In spite of Jeremias' remarks about form criticism (pp. 16 f. [Eng. trans., pp. 20 f.]), the entire second chapter of his book is an exercise in the application of the tenets of form criticism.

⁸³ See Cadoux, pp. 54—59; Dodd, pp. 13 f., 18 f.; Jeremias, pp. 17 f., 112 ff. (Eng. trans., pp. 21 f., 113 f.).

⁸⁴ See Cadoux, pp. 54 ff.; Dodd, pp. 13 f., 18, 85; Jeremias, pp. 17 f. (Eng. trans., pp. 21 f.).

⁸⁵ See Dibelius, pp. 8, 38 (Eng. trans., pp. 8, 41).

⁸⁶ Dodd, p. 19, chaps. 2—3.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 18, chaps. 4—6.

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 18 f., chaps. 4—6.

⁸⁹ See Bultmann, pp. 5 f. (Eng. trans., p. 5).

⁹⁰ See Cadoux, pp. 53 ff.

determined, it in turn, will allegedly suggest the occasion on which the story was first narrated.⁹¹ In this way the original meaning of the story becomes evident.⁹²

While Cadoux and Jeremias employ the same method, Jeremias refines and elaborates it considerably. He formulates and applies 10 laws of transformation (*Gesetze der Umformung*) to the parabolic speech of Jesus in an exhaustive attempt to develop a fully reliable procedure for the dual purpose of recovering the parabolic units in their pristine form and for placing them into concrete situations in the ministry of Jesus.⁹³ Presently, it is the analytical method as refined by Jeremias that is almost universally employed by scholars in the study of Jesus' parabolic speech.

If the immediate objective of Cadoux, Dodd, and Jeremias is strictly methodological in nature, their ultimate objective is strictly theological in nature: to secure from the parabolic speech of Jesus a more adequate understanding of His person and message.⁹⁴ Accordingly, these scholars are convinced that the parabolic speech of Jesus provides them with the singular opportunity to meet the historical Jesus, to hear the message which He Himself preached in the setting in which He preached it.

In his theological assessment of the person of Jesus, Cadoux does not significantly advance beyond the liberal position of Jülicher. For Cadoux, too, Jesus was simply a "highly revered and inspired teacher"

who proclaimed a kingdom based on the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.⁹⁵ Hence, the entire theme of eschatology, which had been brought to the attention of New Testament scholars around the turn of the century by Johannes Weiss⁹⁶ and Albert Schweitzer,⁹⁷ remains unexploited in Cadoux's treatment of the parables.

But such is not the case with Dodd and Jeremias. For them the Jesus of history does indeed present Himself as an eschatological figure. But in what specific way is He to be so thought of? Dodd's answer is that Jesus conceived of Himself as the Son of Man, whose appearance and fate marked the supreme crisis of history, the entrance of the kingdom of God into space and time (realized eschatology).⁹⁸ Jeremias' answer is that Jesus knew Himself to be the savior of mankind, the agent in whose words and deeds the new era of salvation had dawned and through whom it would also at a future date be brought to its consummation, issuing in the visibly established kingdom of God (eschatology that is in process of realization (*sich realisierende Eschatologie*)).⁹⁹

Since Jesus was an eschatological figure, His parabolic speech, continue Dodd and Jeremias, can be made to yield the eschatological truths or decisions with which He

⁹⁵ Cadoux, p. 43; see also p. 78, chaps. 5, 10 to 11.

⁹⁶ See above, fn. 50.

⁹⁷ *Das Messianitäts- und Leidensgeheimnis*, 3d ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1956 [first published 1901]); Eng. trans. by W. Lowrie, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God* (New York: Macmillan, 1950).

⁹⁸ See Dodd, pp. viii, 28—35, 67, 82 ff., 159—63.

⁹⁹ See Jeremias, pp. 15, 115—24, 227 (Eng. trans., pp. 19, 115—24, 230).

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 54—59.

⁹² Jeremias, pp. 17 f. (Eng. trans., pp. 21 f.).

⁹³ *Ibid.*, chap. 2 (Eng. trans., chap. 2).

⁹⁴ See Cadoux, p. 59; Dodd, p. viii; Jeremias, pp. 18, 114, chap. 3 (Eng. trans., pp. 22, 114, chap. 3).

confronted His Jewish hearers. In point of fact, an investigation of this speech, maintains Jeremias, reveals that Jesus utilized it for such varied purposes as proclamation, vindication, invitation to repentance, admonition, exhortation, instruction, consolation, and revelation.¹⁰⁰ In the parabolic speech of Jesus, a cross section of His entire eschatological message is accessible in all its elemental force.

From the eschatological truths Dodd and Jeremias derive from the parabolic speech of Jesus, one easily discovers the conception they share along with Cadoux of the general nature of the settings in which Jesus allegedly uttered the majority of His parabolic units. Cadoux, Dodd, and Jeremias do not conceive of these settings as being largely characterized by the proclamation of the "Gospel." On the contrary, they conceive of them as being characterized by the element of conflict.¹⁰¹ This, in turn, reveals that Cadoux, Dodd, and Jeremias do not primarily construe the parabolic units themselves as vehicles of divine grace, but rather as "weapons of warfare," for with them Jesus is to be seen as correcting, reproving, and attacking His gainsayers.¹⁰² Precisely because they take this view of the majority of Jesus' parabolic units, the program of Cadoux, Dodd, and Jeremias for treating the parabolic speech of Jesus has rightly encountered vigorous criticism.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., chap. 3 (Eng. trans., chap. 3).

¹⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 17 f. (Eng. trans., p. 21). See also Cadoux, p. 56; Dodd, pp. 95, 102, 111, 114, 118, 127, 136.

¹⁰² See Jeremias, p. 18 (Eng. trans., p. 21).

¹⁰³ See, for example, J. J. Vincent, "The Parables of Jesus as Self-Revelation," *Studia Evangelica*, ed. Kurt Aland et al., in *Texte und Untersuchungen*, 73 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1959), 82.

To conclude this section, Dodd and Jeremias, following the lead of Cadoux, give more specific direction to parable interpretation with respect to both methodology and theology. Methodologically, they refine the tools of form criticism so as to recover the parabolic speech of Jesus, so far as this is possible, in its original form and unique historical context. Theologically, they take cognizance of the eschatological character of Jesus' person and proclamation and interpret His parabolic speech accordingly. Whatever the objection to selected aspects of their method or theology, the more basic insights of Dodd and Jeremias have become an indispensable part of parable interpretation.

THE EXISTENTIALIST APPROACH OF ERNST FUCHS

While the influence of Dodd and Jeremias in the field of parable interpretation has maintained itself down to the present, in more recent years a significantly different approach to the parabolic speech of Jesus has emerged. This approach is by design existentialist and hermeneutical in its orientation and represents in large part the achievement of the German New Testament scholar Ernst Fuchs.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Unfortunately, Fuchs' treatment of parabolic speech with regard to method and exegesis is not to be found in any single monograph, though his most recent book is a step in this direction (*Jesus: Wort und Tat* [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1971]). Instead, the pertinent remarks must be gleaned from this book and some five other volumes, two of which contain a discussion of hermeneutics and three of which are collected essays. The volumes to which we shall refer in our presentation of Fuchs' approach to parabolic speech are the following: *Hermeneutik*, 2d ed. (Bad Cannstatt: R. Müllerschön Verlag, 1958); *Zur Frage nach dem historischen Jesus* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1960) (Eng. trans. of most of these essays by A. Scobie, *Studies of the Historical Jesus* [*Studies in Bib-*

Ernst Fuchs is an "old Marburger," a member of that circle of men who claim the privilege of having once studied under Rudolf Bultmann at the University of Marburg. In the case of Fuchs, his early association with Bultmann proved determinative in shaping his interests, as can be seen from the fact that the theological program to which he has devoted his energies may legitimately be regarded as both an extension and a correction of the program of his illustrious mentor. Thus, in line with Bultmann, Fuchs has attempted to carry forward the hermeneutical task of demythologizing (*Entmythologisierung*), though in this respect he is reputed to have "gone beyond" Bultmann in the sense that he has concerned himself less with the understanding of human existence as such (the interest of the "early Heidegger") and more with the understanding of language (the interest of the "later Heidegger").¹⁰⁵ In direct opposition to Bultmann, Fuchs has sided with other old Marburgers and supported, with essays of his own, the so-called new quest

lical Theology, No. 42; London: SCM Press, 1964]); and *Glaube und Erfahrung* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1965). Hereafter the latter two works will be referred to, respectively, as *G(esammelte) A(ufsätze)* II and III.

¹⁰⁵ For a discussion of the way in which Fuchs in his various studies has superseded the work of Bultmann see James M. Robinson, "Jesus' Parables as God Happening," *Jesus and the Historian*, ed. F. Thomas Trotter (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), pp. 140 to 145. For a general introduction to the theological program of Fuchs, which, along with that of Gerhard Ebeling, has been termed the "new hermeneutic" in America, see *The New Hermeneutic*, ed. James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb Jr., Vol. II of *New Frontiers in Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), and Paul J. Achtemeier, *An Introduction to the New Hermeneutic* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969).

of the historical Jesus; as Fuchs sees it, since it was in the proclamation of the historical Jesus that God came to decisive expression, the history of the Word of God necessarily begins with Jesus and not with the kerygma of the early church, as Bultmann would have it.¹⁰⁶

It is primarily as a "new quester" that Fuchs concerns himself with the parabolic speech of Jesus. In his historical investigation of Jesus, Fuchs has no interest whatever in simply establishing brute facts about Him which are amenable to some type of objective verification. Instead, Fuchs is intent on gaining insight into Jesus' understanding of Himself and His own situation.¹⁰⁷ Because Fuchs is of the opinion that the parabolic speech of Jesus will yield such insight, he selects it as the principal part of the subject matter he analyzes. And because it is precisely not his aim to establish "facts" but to probe the sphere of human existence, he appropriately selects as the method of analysis what is known as existentialist interpretation (*existentielle Interpretation*).¹⁰⁸ Accordingly, the goal of Fuchs' historical investigation of Jesus quite logically dictates both his subject matter and his method.

In his *Hermeneutik* Fuchs discusses at length his understanding of the nature of the parabolic speech of Jesus.¹⁰⁹ In addressing himself to the question of form, he demonstrates that he conceives of a parabolic unit as comprising a picture-half and a reality-half that have in com-

¹⁰⁶ See Fuchs, *GA* II, 166 f.; III, 238—41.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 137; III, 238 f., 244 f.

¹⁰⁸ See, for example, *GA*, II, 285 f., 401 f.; III, 216—24.

¹⁰⁹ *Hermeneutik*, pp. 211—30.

mon one point of comparison.¹¹⁰ In addition, he divides the parabolic speech of Jesus into such categories as simile, similitude, parable proper, example-story, metaphor, and allegory.¹¹¹ As is obvious, in these matters of form Fuchs gives evidence of his great indebtedness to Jülicher.¹¹²

But Fuchs goes beyond Jülicher. In his assessment of the relationship between simile and metaphor, Fuchs breaks with the dubious dictates of Jülicher, according to which the two are to be judged as mutually exclusive categories of speech, and adopts the position of Bultmann, according to which the two are to be regarded as related to each other.¹¹³ Specifically, Fuchs prefers to define this relatedness as consisting in the fact that both simile and metaphor live from the power of analogy.¹¹⁴ As we shall see, this point is central to Fuchs' entire conception of parabolic speech. In other respects, like both Bultmann and Jülicher, Fuchs rejects any notion that Jesus may have made use of allegory, with the result that Fuchs virtually excludes it from his discussion of the parabolic speech of Jesus.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 214 f., 221 f., 224 f.; see also Fuchs, *GA* II, 136 f., 329—34.

¹¹¹ *Hermeneutik*, pp. 212—20.

¹¹² See above, pp. 4—ff.

¹¹³ Bultmann is completely faithful to the parabolic precepts of Jülicher except for the fact that he does not view the simile and the metaphor as mutually exclusive forms of speech (see pp. 183, 214 f. [Eng. trans., pp. 169, 197 ff.]). Of course, logically, one would think that Bultmann could not take this position without breaking in principle with Jülicher's parable theory. But, owing to his remarkable line of reasoning, such is not the case (see p. 214 [Eng. trans., p. 198]).

¹¹⁴ *Hermeneutik*, pp. 211—16.

¹¹⁵ See Fuchs' negative remarks concerning allegory, *ibid.*, pp. 220, 228.

We stated that it is the contention of Fuchs that the simile (and related forms) and the metaphor live from the power of analogy. Analogy, insists Fuchs, is the most strikingly peculiar mode of speech in the entire New Testament;¹¹⁶ it contains within itself the very "language-power of existence" (*Sprachkraft der Existenz*).¹¹⁷ What is the significance of this statement?

Analogy,¹¹⁸ claims Fuchs, is not a kind of speech that conveys information to the hearer; its purpose is manifestly not to increase the hearer's fund of knowledge concerning the subject matter the words bring to expression.¹¹⁹ Instead, it is indicative of analogy that it clothes itself in indirect speech (that is to say, there is talk about one thing even though something else is actually meant) and that it is contrived to touch the hearer's attitude (*Einstellung*).¹²⁰

What Fuchs' understanding of analogy means with reference to parabolic forms is that the narrator attempts through his use of pictorial language so to focus the hearer's attention on a given subject matter or character as to lead the hearer to assume a specific attitude toward that subject matter or character. Alternately, this specific attitude is the identical one the narrator would wish the hearer to adopt as regards some other person or reality that has not at all come to expression in the

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 212.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 214.

¹¹⁸ For a more extensive treatment of Fuchs' understanding of analogy see the present writer's article, "Ernst Fuchs' Existentialist Interpretation of the Parables," *Lutheran Quarterly*, 22 (1970), 383 ff., 389—92.

¹¹⁹ *Hermeneutik*, p. 214.

¹²⁰ Ibid., pp. 211, 213 f., 216—19.

pictorial language (for example, the "hearer himself" or the "kingdom of God"). In view of such transference of attitude, it readily becomes apparent that the decisive thing about analogy is the potential it ostensibly possesses for shaping attitudes and, consequently, for changing attitudes. Moreover, on the assumption that the subject matter coming to expression in parabolic speech can be one's understanding of existence, it follows that if the hearer's attitude toward existence can be changed, his very existence can be changed. It is precisely to this changing of one's (understanding of) existence through parabolic speech born of analogy that Fuchs is referring when he states that there inheres in analogy the language-power of existence. In another context, Fuchs points to this same phenomenon and terms it a "language-event" (*Sprachereignis*).¹²¹

Fuchs asserts that the foremost expression of analogy is the parable proper (*Parabel*).¹²² Constitutive of a parable proper is, again, a picture-half and a reality-half which relate to each other by means of the point of comparison. The function of the point of comparison is to impel the hearer to decision (*Entscheidung*).¹²³ The circumstance that the hearer is impelled to decision reveals that at the outset he and the narrator do not find themselves in agreement concerning the subject matter the parable is bringing to expression, (for example, the "kingdom of God"). Once the parable is narrated,

therefore, the decision the hearer makes with respect to the subject matter illuminated by the parable will either be what was intended by the narrator, in which case the hearer has entered into agreement (*Einverständnis*) with him, or it will be contrary to what the narrator intended, in which case the hearer will enter into opposition to him.¹²⁴ Since in Jesus' narration of parables the subject matter regularly had to do with the hearer's understanding of existence, the decision impelled by the point of comparison served either to create a common understanding of existence between Him and the hearer and therefore fellowship, or, on the other hand, it served to engender opposition to Him from the side of the hearer.¹²⁵ Regardless of what the hearer's decision in any specific instance was, through a parable of Jesus language-event always took place, that is to say, through the parable the language-power of existence was in each case brought to bear upon the hearer.

The historical Jesus, argues Fuchs, was a man who Himself had made a decision.¹²⁶ Though confronted with the violent death of John the Baptizer, Jesus nevertheless determined that God was a God of grace.¹²⁷ This decision on the part of Jesus involved a totally new understanding of time.¹²⁸ According to it, the future was seen as the time that God had reserved to Himself, the time of the coming of His kingdom.¹²⁹ The present was the time qualified by the future, the time dur-

¹²¹ See, for example, *GA* II, 347, 379, 424 to 430; III, 239 ff.

¹²² *Hermeneutik*, p. 219.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 221, 224 f.; see also *GA* II, 137, 157, 329 ff.; III, 239.

¹²⁴ *Hermeneutik*, pp. 223, 229.

¹²⁵ *GA* II, 349, 354 f.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 157 ff.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 157—61.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 158, 335—49, 364—69.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 318, 342 f., 347.

ing which God was granting men time to be called to the kingdom.¹³⁰

It was in the conduct (*Verhalten*) of Jesus, states Fuchs, that His new understanding about God and time reflected itself.¹³¹ Knowing God to be a gracious God, Jesus revealed God's love to others in that He never refused the sinners who came to Him and, indeed, even granted them table fellowship.¹³² Of paramount significance is the fact that Jesus also summoned men to the kingdom.¹³³ In so doing, He was bringing God Himself to expression and was thus making the future kingdom effective even at that moment in the lives of men.¹³⁴ Through His proclamation Jesus called men to faith (*Glaube*),¹³⁵ that is, He invited them to repeat for themselves the decision He Himself had made whereby they, too, could gain a new understanding of time and of their relationship to God. Implicit in this call to faith was also the gift of freedom (*Freiheit*).¹³⁶ freedom from the sinful past, freedom to be open to the future, and freedom to assume responsibility for the present, which meant above all that the present was to be seen as the time for love (*Liebe*)¹³⁷ and hence for community (*Gemeinschaft*).¹³⁸ Consequently, in summoning men to the kingdom, Jesus was calling them to faith, freedom, and love and therefore to a new understanding

of themselves and of human existence as carried on in the presence of God.¹³⁹

The parable, continues Fuchs, was a major instrument used by Jesus in His summons to the kingdom.¹⁴⁰ By using the parable, Jesus could depict some aspect of everyday life which would be familiar to the hearer, thus securing his attention and assent, and yet invest it with an element sufficiently bizarre (for example, some "boundary situation" {*Grenzfall*}) so as to disturb him, call his present understanding of existence into question, and offer to him a new understanding of existence corresponding to the new time of the kingdom.¹⁴¹ At the point of Jesus' narration of a parable, the hearer was therefore impelled to decision: either he could reject the new understanding of existence offered him in the parable, or he could accept it, thus entering into agreement with Jesus (coming to faith) and following His summons to carry on life in the presence of God (receiving God's gift of freedom and responding in love). In this way, every parable of Jesus was of the nature of a language-event, for in it God was brought to expression and, for good or for ill, the existence of the hearer was exposed to divine determination.¹⁴²

In barest outline that is the existentialist approach of Ernst Fuchs to the parabolic speech of Jesus. What we have not broached is his hermeneutical guidelines for making the parabolic speech of Jesus fruitful for preaching today. Still, on the basis of what has been said, it is now pos-

¹³⁰ Ibid., pp. 313 f., 346 f., 351.

¹³¹ Ibid., pp. 154—58.

¹³² Ibid., pp. 154, 156, 158 f.

¹³³ Compare *ibid.*, III, 244.

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp. 243 ff.

¹³⁵ Ibid., II, 157, 335—49, 415; III, 226.

¹³⁶ Ibid., II, 317 f., 350—56.

¹³⁷ Ibid., II, 351 f.; III, 224 ff.

¹³⁸ Ibid., II, 158 f., 253; III, 223.

¹³⁹ Ibid., II, 364; III, 226, 239 f.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., III, 239 f.

¹⁴¹ See *Hermeneutik*, pp. 223 ff., 229, and *GA* III, 239—45.

¹⁴² *GA* II, 364; III, 239 f.

sible to see clearly some of the emphases that are characteristic of Fuchs' treatment of parabolic speech. Like Dodd and Jeremias, Fuchs, too, stresses the eschatological orientation of the parabolic speech of Jesus, though the fundamental difference in this respect is that Fuchs defines it linguistically rather than temporally. Contrary to Dodd and Jeremias, the parables are seen by Fuchs, not primarily as weapons of warfare, nor in line with Jülicher as pictorial illustrations of moral truths, but as vehicles for proclaiming to men the Word of God ("Gospel"). Unique to Fuchs is the existentialist analysis to which he subjects parabolic speech, as well as the fact that in his approach the form of the parable is not to be regarded as something accidental or incidental but of a piece with the content and the function of the parable. Because his treatment of parabolic speech is styled as a response to the need of the times, Fuchs has secured for himself a sizeable following in the field of parable interpretation.

PRESENT TRENDS IN PARABLE INTERPRETATION

Since theologians in general and Biblical scholars in particular are occupied, if not preoccupied, at the present time with the hermeneutical problem of how to make the Biblical documents of the first century "speak their message" in the changed world of the 20th century, it is not surprising that the existentialist-hermeneutical approach to parabolic speech, which derives from the work of Bultmann and especially Fuchs, should currently hold sway in the field of parable interpretation. By and large, a review of the specialized studies of the parables which have appeared in the last decade reveals an attempt on

the part of pupils and followers of Bultmann or Fuchs to advance or refine the work of their mentors. Thus, Eta Linne-mann (1961),¹⁴³ a student of Fuchs, has called attention in her volume to the decisive role the original hearers of Jesus must have played in His narration of any given parable. Similarly, Eberhard Jüngel (1962),¹⁴⁴ also a student of Fuchs, has challenged Jülicher's axiom according to which a parable is comprised of a picture-half and a reality-half having in common a single point of comparison by asserting that Jesus employed parables in such a manner that it was precisely "in parable as parable" that He brought the kingdom of God to expression. On the American scene, Robert Funk (1966)¹⁴⁵ has provided a sophisticated discussion of the approach of Ernst Fuchs, demonstrating in addition his own adaptation of it in the analysis of parables. In other respects, the Englishman Geraint Jones (1964),¹⁴⁶ reflecting the influence of Bultmann, has undertaken to show the way to an existential treatment of the parables of Jesus which would also adequately take into account their character as forms of narrative art. Taking his cue from Jones, Bultmann, and to a lesser extent Fuchs, Dan Via (1967)¹⁴⁷ has based his study of the parables on an existentialist hermeneutic which

¹⁴³ *Gleichnisse Jesu* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), pp. 27—41; Eng. trans. by John Sturdy, *Parables of Jesus* (London: S. P. C. K., 1966), pp. 18—33.

¹⁴⁴ *Paulus und Jesus* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1962), pp. 135 f.

¹⁴⁵ *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

¹⁴⁶ *The Art and Truth of the Parables* (London: S. P. C. K., 1964), esp. chaps. 5—6.

¹⁴⁷ *The Parables* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), pp. ix—x.

is coupled with a literary analysis of the parables as genuine works of art. To repeat, these studies are tribute to the existentialist-hermeneutical tradition of Bultmann and Fuchs.

Outside this particular line of development, proportionately fewer parable studies have recently appeared. Acknowledging his indebtedness to Jeremias, Norman Perrin (1967)¹⁴⁸ has attempted to draw on the parables of Jesus in an effort to rediscover the teaching of Jesus. From the standpoint of redaction criticism, the present writer¹⁴⁹ has endeavored to determine

¹⁴⁸ *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1967), chaps. 2—4.

¹⁴⁹ *The Parables of Jesus in Matthew 13* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1969).

what role the eight parables found in Matthew 13 play within the ground plan and theology of the first gospel.

In looking back over the modern history of parable interpretation, it is evident that in the preceding eight decades considerable progress has been made toward achieving a more proper interpretation of the parabolic speech of Jesus. As the preacher informs himself of this progress, he soon discovers that in the area of parable interpretation he has been masterfully served by scholarly endeavor, and that as a result of this endeavor he can the more confidently lay the parabolic texts at the basis of his proclamation.

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