

THE SYNOPTIC PARABLES.

THE publication in 1886 of Prof. Jülicher's *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu* marks an epoch in the study of the parables of the New Testament. Prof. Jülicher was the first to apply to the subject as a whole the thorough methods of modern critical enquiry. He was in a certain sense a pioneer, and it is only natural that the permanent value of his work is to be found rather in its suggestions than in its conclusions.

Prof. Jülicher begins by drawing a hard and fast distinction between a parable and an allegory. An allegory is an extended metaphor: it is a similitude which corresponds seriatim with the thing represented; and it needs exposition. A parable on the other hand is an enlarged simile. The illustration has only one point of contact with the thing signified: but that one point is obvious, and no explanation is required.

The stories in the Synoptic gospels, Prof. Jülicher maintains, are strictly parables. It is in the fourth gospel alone that we find allegories, and these are later. The illustrations used by Jesus Himself are parables; they have but one point, and that an obvious one. If in some cases they are obscure, or appear to have more points than one, it is because they have been tampered with in the course of transmission.

In the light of this assumption, applied, it must be confessed, in a somewhat arbitrary manner, Prof. Jülicher examines the whole of the parables recorded in the Synoptic gospels, and he examines them with learning and acuteness, and at considerable length.¹

In two respects particularly, Prof. Jülicher's work marks an advance. In the first place he broke away from the tradition that the meaning of the Synoptic parables was to be worked out detail by detail, or in other words, that they were to be treated as allegories.

Against this traditional view Prof. Jülicher raised a forcible and effective protest. It is now scarcely too much to say that there is no longer room to doubt that the interest of the Synoptic parables is always focused to a point, and that the first and main duty of the student is to find that point.

In the second place Prof. Jülicher's work has shed light upon the function of the parables of Jesus. Any writer on the subject is bound

¹ The 1910 edition of *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu* consists of nearly a thousand pages (Part I, 328; Part II, 643).

sooner or later to discuss the difficult passage which precedes the explanation of the parable of the Sower (Mk. iv 10-13 and parallels¹ Mt. xiii 10-18, Lk. viii 9-11):—

Mark iv ¹⁰ Καὶ ὅτε ἐγένετο κατὰ μόνας, ἡρώτων αὐτὸν οἱ περὶ αὐτὸν σὺν τοῖς δώδεκα τὰς παραβολάς.² ¹¹ καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς Ὑμῶν τὸ μυστήριον δέδοται τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ· ἐκείνοις δὲ τοῖς ἕξω ἐν παραβολαῖς τὰ πάντα γίνεται, ¹² ἵνα βλέποντες βλέπωσι καὶ μὴ ἴδωσιν, καὶ ἀκούοντες ἀκούωσι καὶ μὴ συνίωσιν, μὴ ποτε ἐπιστρέψωσιν καὶ ἀφεθῇ αὐτοῖς. ¹³ καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς Οὐκ οἴδατε τὴν παραβολὴν³ ταύτην καὶ πῶς πάσας τὰς παραβολὰς γνόσεσθε;

Whatever may be the precise meaning of these words,⁴ Prof. Jülicher is surely right in maintaining that our Lord could not have meant that He made use of parables for the express purpose of concealing the truth from His hearers. It is evident from the character of the parables themselves, that their primary purpose was to enliven and illustrate teaching. In this very chapter St Mark tells us that He spake the word unto the people 'as they were able to hear it'; and that the evangelist realized that, in some cases at any rate, the interpretation of a parable was obvious may be inferred from his observation in xii 12 'They perceived that he spake the parable against them'. Nor was it only to 'those without' that Jesus spoke in parables. According to St Mark's account (Mk. xiii 3) the parable of the fig-tree was spoken to four of the apostles privately upon the mount of Olives.

Prof. Jülicher proposes a short way with the passage. He would reject it as a later addition to the primitive tradition, made by Christians who had come to regard the parables of Jesus as allegories, and to see mysteries where all was originally plain.

But it is by no means necessary to resort to such a drastic expedient. In interpreting the passage three considerations must be borne in mind:

(i) The interpretation of the preceding parable, the parable of the Sower, lies on the surface, as the words of Jesus in v. 13 imply.⁵ The real question was not why should the people be bewildered by abstruse parables, but rather why should any further explanation be given of

¹ There is nothing in Matthew and Luke to suggest that they were using any other source than Mark in this passage.

² The plural seems to indicate that this question was asked at the end of the day, but inserted in this place by St Mark in order that the parable of the Sower might be immediately followed by its explanation.

³ We must suppose that the account of the conversation has been compressed. 'Those about him with the twelve' asked about the parables they had just heard (τὰς παραβολάς), the first they mentioned in particular being the parable of the Sower.

⁴ In *The Parables of the Gospels* (the Hulsean Prize Essay, 1912), Mr L. E. Browne gives a very careful and suggestive exposition of the passage (chapter iv).

⁵ οὐκ οἴδατε τὴν παραβολὴν.

what was itself quite clear. The answer Jesus suggested was that to 'those about Him with the twelve', i.e. to those who had been sufficiently interested in His teaching to gather closer around Him,¹ and who thereby proved themselves the 'elect', the chosen of God, it had been given (i.e. by God) to know the secret of God's Kingdom.

(ii) The word *παραβολή* (= *לשׁוֹן*) has a considerable range of meaning, and is used not merely of illustrative stories but also in the sense of 'dark sayings'² e.g. in Num. xxiv 3, of the prophecies of Balaam.³

(iii) The words beginning with *ἴνα* are a quotation from the prophet Isaiah (Isa. vi 9, 10).

In view of these considerations the passage may be paraphrased thus :

'To you it has been granted by God to know the secret of God's kingdom (and you shall have it explained to you if need be line by line). But (if you do not understand this simple parable, it is certain those outside this little company do not understand either this or any other of my parables, and) to those outside, the whole thing comes to be⁴ parabolic (i. e. cryptic), in order that⁵—as Isaiah puts it—seeing they may not see . . .'

The train of reasoning is so compressed that, like many of the arguments of the Rabbinical schools recorded in the Talmud, it needs to be expanded in order to be made clear.

Jesus had come to feel that if all His efforts to make His teaching forcible and clear were lost upon His hearers, it must be because their hearts were blinded. His experience, in other words, had become identical with that of Isaiah, and He applied the prophet's language to His own case.

It is true that Jesus Himself sometimes gave utterance to paradoxical sayings which might well be called *παραβολαί*, dark sayings, e.g. Lk. xiv 26 *Ἐἴ τις ἔρχεται πρὸς με καὶ οὐ μισεῖ τὸν πατέρα ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τὴν μητέρα . . . οὐ δύναται εἶναι μου μαθητής*. But even here the primary purpose of Jesus was to arrest the attention of His hearers. The punitive element was at the most secondary, and, as in the case of Isaiah, in a sense an after-thought. It is characteristic of the Hebrew prophets after an event to see the direct action of God in it, and to express their view of the

¹ Cf. Mk. vii 17.

² Cf. Mk. vii 17.

³ Cf. Num. R. s. 14, end : *כי אמר במשלמים . . . ועם בלעם*, God spoke to Balaam only through parables.

⁴ The form of this sentence is important (*ἐν παραβολαῖς τὰ πάντα γίνονται*). Jesus does not say 'I give all my teaching in parables' but 'all things come to be in parables'.

⁵ The *ἴνα* has in it the suggestion, as Lagrange has pointed out, of *ἴνα πληρωθῆ* (*Rev. Bibl.* 1910, p. 28).

fore-disposal of things by God in language which is strange to Western ears.¹

Prof. Jülicher's free handling of the verses in question is typical of his attitude to his sources in general. Throughout his work he shews a tendency to make hard and fast categories and then to force his data into them. In particular, the distinction which he insists upon between parables and allegories is at the best merely a convenient and academical one. It is a distinction by no means strictly marked in the speech of to-day, and what is more important, we have evidence to shew that it was not observed any more rigidly in Palestine in the first century A. D.

This evidence is derived from a study of the parables in the Talmud and kindred Jewish writings. These writings are a storehouse of heterogeneous material of uncertain date, and it is therefore very difficult to estimate their value for the study of the New Testament. It is, however, practically certain that they contain elements which go back to the Rabbis who lived in Palestine in the first century of the Christian era.

Dr Paul Fiebig's *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu im Lichte der rabbinischen Gleichnisse des neutestamentlichen Zeitalters*, published in 1912, embodies the most thorough and systematic effort that has yet been made to bring to bear upon the Synoptic parables the results of a study of the parables of the Rabbis. In this book the author shewed among other things that Prof. Jülicher was mistaken in applying his literary analysis of the difference between an allegory and a parable to New Testament times; for, as Dr Fiebig pointed out, many of the stories attributed to Palestinian Rabbis of that age are partly allegories and partly parables. It will be best to let a few actual specimens of Rabbinical parables speak for themselves.

Rabbinical Parables and the Parables in the Synoptic Gospels.

1. A parable occurs in the Babylonian Talmud² Aboda zara 54^b 55^a (Goldschmidt, vii pp. 989 f)³ as follows:—

A philosopher asked Rabban Gamaliel,⁴ It is written in your law 'the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, a jealous God',⁵ why is His jealousy directed towards those that serve the god and not towards the god himself?

¹ This account of Hosea's marriage (Hos. i 2) is perhaps the most familiar instance: 'The Lord said unto Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredom and children of whoredom.'

² It is wanting in the Jerusalem Talmud, and so also is example 2 (below).

³ Fiebig gives a very literal translation of this parable on p. 58 of his book.

⁴ i. e. probably Rabban Gamaliel II, c. 90-110 A. D. (This and the following dates are taken from Strack's *Einleitung in den Talmud.*)

⁵ Deut. iv 24.

He said to him, I will tell thee a parable. To what is the matter like? To a king of flesh and blood who had a son, and the son reared a dog and put upon him a name according to the name of his father, and when he swore he said, By the life of the dog my father. When the king heard of it, with whom was he wrath? Was he wrath with the son or was he wrath with the dog? He said to him, He was wrath with the son.

In Mekhilta, Par. Jethro, Par. 6,¹ we have a different form of the story. The philosopher, quoting Deut. iv 24 as before, asks if there is any power in the gods since the worship of them is an offence against God. Rabban Gamaliel answers, If a man calls his dog by the name of his father, and when he swears, swears by the life of this dog, with whom is the father angry, with the son or with the dog? To this question the philosopher makes no reply.

2. The following parable also occurs in two versions which it may be worth while to set side by side for the purpose of comparison:—

Sabbath xxiii 5 (Goldschmidt,
i p. 706).

So Solomon said in his wisdom,
Let thy garments be always white
and let not thy head lack ointment.

Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai²

Midrash Ḳoheleth v.³

Let thy garments be always
white and let not thine head lack
ointment.

Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Zakkai said, The Scripture cannot refer to white garments, because the Gentiles have white garments: nor can the scripture refer to sweet ointment, for the Gentiles have sweet ointment. There is no reference to these things here, but rather to commandments and good works and Torah.

compared the matter to a king⁵
who invited his servants to a feast,

Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi⁴: they tell a parable, To what is the matter like? To a king who made a feast and invited guests.⁶ He said to them,

¹ Here I am following Fiebig's translation (*op. cit.* p. 57).

² On Eccles. ix 8. I have used the Warsaw ed. 1876.

³ c. 70-100 A. D.

⁴ c. 200 A. D.

⁵ P (the Bomberg ed., Venice 1520-1523) reads לְאִישׁ, a man; but the argument of the wise (see below) seems to depend on the fact that the house was the house of a king.

⁶ אֹרְחִים.

Sabbath xxiii 5 (Goldschmidt,
i p. 706).

Midrash Koheleth v.

and did not appoint a time for them. The wise¹ among them adorned themselves and sat at the door of the king's palace.² They said, Is there anything lacking in a king's palace? But the foolish³ among them went to their work. They said, Is there ever a feast without preparation?⁴

Go and wash and cleanse and anoint yourselves and wash your clothes and make yourselves ready for the feast. And he did not appoint them a time when they should come to the feast. And the wise¹ waited² at the door of the king's palace.³ They said, Is there anything lacking in a king's palace? The foolish⁴ among them did not trouble and did not pay attention to the king's word. They said, At length we shall see some sign of the king's feast. Is there ever a feast without preparation.⁵ And they took counsel one with another; and the lime-burner went to his lime, the potter to his clay, the smith to his charcoal, the laundryman to his wash-house.

Suddenly⁶ the king summoned his servants. The wise among them assembled before him adorned as they were, and the foolish assembled before him untidy as they were.

Suddenly⁶ the king said, Let all come to the feast. They hastened, the wise came in their glory,⁷ the others came in their untidiness.

The king rejoiced over the wise and was wrath with the foolish.

The king rejoiced over the wise because they had fulfilled the king's word and moreover had done honour to the king's palace; and he was wrath with the foolish because they had not fulfilled the king's word and had dishonoured

¹ פיקחין.

² בית.

³ מיפשיין.

⁴ טורה.

⁵ בפתאום (om. ב, München MS).

¹ הפקחין.

² מטיילין.

³ פלטיין.

⁴ הטיכשין.

⁵ הטרח.

⁶ פתאום.

⁷ בכבודם.

Sabbath xxiii 5 (Goldschmidt, i
p. 706).

He said, As for those who have adorned themselves for the feast they shall sit and eat and drink. As for those who have not adorned themselves for the feast they shall stand and look on.

The son-in law of R. Meir¹ in the name of R. Meir: So they would appear as waiters; rather both kinds sit down, the former eat, the latter go hungry, the former drink, the latter go thirsty, as it is said,² Thus saith the Lord, Behold my servants shall eat but ye shall be hungry: behold my servants shall drink but ye shall be thirsty: behold my servants shall shout for joy of heart but ye shall cry out for pain of heart.

Midrash Koheleth v.

the king's palace. The king said, Those who have prepared themselves for the feast shall enter in and eat of the king's feast; but those who have not prepared themselves for the feast shall not eat of the king's feast. If possible they would have gone and withdrawn from them. Again spake the king saying, Nay, but the first shall sit at table and eat and drink; and the second shall stand upon their feet and suffer and see and be envious. So in the age to come it will be as Isaiah says,³ Behold my servants shall eat and ye shall be hungry.

There follows a saying in the name of R. Meir.

3. Pirqe Aboth iii 25.⁴

R. Akiba used to say:—

Everything is given on pledge; and the net⁵ is cast over all the living. The office is open; and the broker gives credit and the ledger is open; and the hand writes; and whosoever will borrow comes and borrows; and the bailiffs go round continually every day, and exact from a man whether he wills or not; and they have whereon to lean, and judgement is a judgement of truth. And everything is prepared for the banquet.

It will be observed in the first place that none of these three examples is a pure parable, but each contains allegorical elements.

Thus, in the first example, the king stands for God, the dog for the heathen idol, the son for the worshipper: in the second, the king again represents God; the guests men, the earnest and the careless; the feast the festival of the Messianic age: while the third example is a running allegory which is very similar in style and general purport to the allegory 'On the way to the courts', Lk. xii 58, 59.

¹ c. 130-160 A. D.

² Is. lxxv 13, 14.

³ Is. lxxv 13.

⁴ The translation is that of Dr C. Taylor.

⁵ Eccles. ix 12.

Again, the manner in which the first of the stories¹ is introduced is worthy of attention; I will tell thee a parable, To what is the matter like?, followed by the *dative* of the name of the principal actor in the story, whether he is the central point of comparison or not.

Thus the curious inconsequence of language so noticeable in the introduction of such a parable as that of the Pearl of Great Price (Mt. xiii 45)² finds its exact parallel in the language of the Rabbinical schools. The question and answer with which Example 1 ends may also be compared with the question and answer which are found at the end of the parable of the Two Debtors³ (Luke vii 42, 43).

Again, it is not without significance for the study of the Synoptic parables, that the first two examples quoted above exist in two versions. In Example 1, the version in the older source (the Mekhilta) seems to be a shortened form of the version which is preserved in the Talmud, but 'man' may be more original than 'king'. In Example 2 the later⁴ form of the parable, that in *Ḳoheleth Rabbah*, is longer than the other, and supplies a description of the guests dispersing to their various employments which may well belong to the story as originally told by Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai.

In any case, there is a striking parallel between these two versions and the two versions of the Synoptic parable of the Feast and the Guests (Mt. xxii 2-14, Lk. xiv 16-24). In this connexion it is worthy of remark that the changes which have crept into the Rabbinical parables in the course of their transmission are very limited in range; the editorial improvements lie on the surface and do not alter the general meaning.

The next question that suggests itself is the question of the contexts in which the Rabbinical parables are found. An examination of the thirty-six Rabbinical passages collected by Fiebig leads to the following conclusions:—

(i) That the stories are in general carefully connected with the name of some Rabbi.⁵

¹ And cf. the second version of no. 2.

² 'The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is a merchantman. . . .'

³ Cf. also the question at the end of the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen (Mk. xii 9).

⁴ It bears signs of editorial improvement. Thus the 'house' of the king (בית) becomes the palace (פלטין): those who are invited are not servants but guests (אורחים). Moreover, 'Rabbi' Yoḥanan appears to be a mistake for 'Rabban' Yoḥanan.

⁵ In Example 2 above, the parable in its older version is ascribed, and probably rightly, to Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, but the later version to Judah ha-Nasi. The mistake was an easy one, owing to Judah ha-Nasi's great reputation as the compiler

(ii) That the situation which called forth the story is frequently recorded, especially if it is a personal and local one. For example, the occasion of one of the Rabbinical parables is said to have been the death of a son of Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai¹; and another parable is represented as having been called forth by a question of the disciples of Hillel as he was going to take a bath.²

This, of course, is only natural. Stories are often intimately bound up with the circumstances in which they were first told; part, at least, of their significance depends upon an understanding of their original context, and the story and its setting will be remembered together. This is the case—to take a modern example—with many of the anecdotes which are recorded of Abraham Lincoln.³ Thus both in the 'Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln'⁴ and in the Talmud we frequently have reported sayings set in a historical framework, the general truth of which there is no reason to doubt. And this applies *mutatis mutandis* to the contexts of the parables in the Gospels.

Thus there is every reason to suppose that the parable of the unfor-
giving servant (Mt. xviii 23 ff) was spoken in answer to a question from St Peter,⁵ and that the parable of the Rich Fool was called forth by the request 'Master, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me' (Lk. xii 13). Nor can we doubt the originality of the contexts of the parable of the Two Debtors (Lk. vii 36 ff) and the Good Samaritan (Lk. x 25 ff), although the relation of these two passages to the passages which resemble them in St Mark (Mk. xiv 3 ff, and xii 28 ff) is very puzzling.

(iii) On the other hand if a Rabbinical parable deals with a general subject like preparation for death (Example 2) it is often unconnected with a context.

of the Mishna; and it will have been noticed that the name of Yoḥanan ben Zakkai occurs in the immediate context.

¹ Fiebig *op. cit.* p. 48.

² Fiebig *op. cit.* pp. 7 f.

³ My attention was first called to the parables of Abraham Lincoln by Prof. Burkitt. A study of them raises interesting suggestions for the study of the synoptic parables. For instance, it appears that Abraham Lincoln often found the telling of a story a relief to his feelings in times of tension and anxiety; and it is noticeable that the gospel tradition associates the first of the longer parables of Jesus with His realization of the failure, in a certain sense, of His mission. Further, it appears that Abraham Lincoln's parables, simple as they were, frequently bewildered those who heard them, partly perhaps because they often came out quite unexpectedly,—a fact which is not without significance for the psychology of the parables of the Gospels.

⁴ A. T. Rice (Blackwood, 1886).

⁵ On one occasion at least, St Matthew has refrained from introducing St Peter as a questioner when he might have done so (Mt. xxiv 44), and when St Luke actually does so (Lk. xii 41).

Similar instances in the New Testament would be the parable of the Talents, the parable of the Pounds, the parable of the Unjust Judge, and so on.

The result of the preceding enquiry has been to shew that the style and the setting of the parables recorded in the Synoptic gospels correspond very closely with the Rabbinical manner of story-telling as reflected in the Talmud and kindred Jewish sources.¹ It is not unfair to draw from this fact the inference that the form in which the parables have been transmitted in the Synoptic tradition is very nearly that in which they were spoken by Jesus Himself.

But it will be well to go more thoroughly into the question of the transmission of the parables by the three Synoptists.

The Transmission of the Parables in the Synoptic Gospels.

A parable naturally lends itself to a certain amount of alteration. The general outline is not easily forgotten, and is not likely to be disturbed, but the story-teller has little hesitation in introducing a fresh detail here and there to add vividness to the tale or to draw out the moral, and in omitting a point which seemed to be irrelevant or obscure.

Moreover, the three evangelists have each a 'personal equation', which we must always be prepared to take into account. It is smallest in the case of St Mark. St Mark does not write Greek easily,² and his manner is that of a teacher rather than of an author. He seems to be reproducing very closely the teaching of St Peter and to be keeping as nearly as possible to his master's quaint and rough phrases, which had perhaps become familiar to the Roman Christians for whom he was writing.

St Matthew, as Harnack says,³ 'edits his sources in a very conservative spirit', and also, it may be added, with a very definite purpose, viz. the edification of the new people of God, the Christian Church.

In the person of St Luke we have a combination of Greek and Hebrew elements. A Greek by birth and education, he had become an enthusiastic admirer of the Jewish⁴ Scriptures and an ardent disciple

¹ It is only very rarely that we find any traces of Christian influence in these Jewish writings. For a curious instance of indirect New Testament influence see this JOURNAL, July 1914, p. 615, where Prof. Burkitt throws out the suggestion that a parable attributed by R. Nathan (Aboth R. Nathan, xxiv), to Elisha ben Abuyah (i. e. to a well-known apostate Rabbi), and parallel both in simile and in meaning to the parable of the House, Mt. vii 24-27, may have been derived from one of the Minim, that is, the Christians, and put down to Elisha to avoid offence.

² As a single instance, notice the use of *ἐρρα* in iv 21.

³ *Words of Jesus* p. 37.

⁴ Thus he does not omit the hyperbolic statement of his source, 'It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fall', xvi 17.

of the Jewish Messiah. It is instructive to compare him with another writer who a couple of centuries earlier had gone through a similar process in the reverse order.

Jesus ben Sirach was a Jew of Palestine whose loyalty to the law and customs of his fathers did not prevent his welcoming with eagerness the new Greek thought which was permeating the life of Western Asia.

The two writers have the same strong ethical feeling (Ecclus. iv 1 ff): they are both alike interested in the rules and customs of polite society (Lk. xiv 1 ff; cf. Ecclus. xxxii 1 ff), and alive to the charm and beauty of the world and of a well-ordered human life: and they both lay emphasis on broadmindedness and patience as well as upon cheerfulness and goodwill to all men.¹ They are both interested in medicine: they are both convinced of the power of prayer and of the over-ruling hand of Providence (Ecclus. xxxvii 15): and finally, they both appear to have very similar conceptions of the functions of literary persons. 'If a man of knowledge hear a wise word, he will commend it, and add unto it', says Jesus ben Sirach (xxi 15); and in St Luke's versions of the Parables of our Lord we find many little touches that seem to shew that in his own gentle way he is putting that precept into practice.

But we can apply a searching test to St Matthew and St Luke by examining the use which they have made of a source which they had in common, and which has survived in approximately the same form as that in which they used it, viz. Mark.

The first parabolic saying which they have taken from Mark is the saying about the wedding guests (Mk. ii 18-20, Mt. ix 14, 15, Lk. v 33-35). St Matthew follows Mark exactly, except that he makes it clearer who asked our Lord the question. St Luke avoids Mark's loose use of *δύναται*; and he is at pains to make it clear that our Lord was not condemning fasting in itself but only fasting under certain conditions (*τυκνά*). Similarly, apart from slight stylistic improvements, and a remark of satisfaction at the end, St Matthew leaves Mark's parables of the cloth and wine unchanged (Mk. ii 21, 22, Mt. ix 16, 17, Lk. v 36-38). But St Luke tries to picture what actually happens to the cloth, and retells the story in his own way. His alteration, however, is not due² to his interpretation of the parable, but simply to his interest in the story itself.

¹ A good example of St Luke's liberality of thought is to be found in Lk. v 39. Though St Luke omits the words 'for all peoples' in our Lord's designation of the Temple as the house of prayer (Mk. xi 17), and has little sympathy with the protrusion of the old dispensation into the new, yet it is in his Gospel alone that we find the striking saying, 'No man having drunk old wine straightway desireth new, for he saith, The old is good'.

² *Pace* Hahn, B. and J. Weiss, and Holtzmann. St Luke makes the absurdity of the procedure more obvious, and simplifies the point of the parable.

We come next to the parable of the Sower (Mk. iv 3 ff, Mt. xiii 3 ff, Lk. viii 4 ff). Here, again, St Matthew follows Mark with only the slightest attempt at improvement (generally towards shortening), and merely reverses the order of fruitfulness at the end in order that the most satisfactory result may be mentioned first. St Luke, however, improves the story in three or four respects. He adds a good (though a rather obvious) point in viii 5 (*καὶ κατεπαρήθη*): he will not say that the plant has no root (viii 6—but that it lacks moisture): he perceives that the thorns were not visible during the sowing, but grew up with the good seed: and finally he makes a more effective¹ ending to the parable by mentioning only one degree of fruitfulness, 'a hundredfold'.

A comparison of the different versions of the interpretation of this parable is also instructive (Mk. iv 13 ff, Mt. xiii 18 ff, Lk. viii 11 ff). In addition to slight improvements of style we notice a distinct tendency in both St Matthew and St Luke to shorten St Mark's rather cumbersome descriptions. Thus both evangelists leave out *αἱ περὶ τὰ λοιπὰ ἐπιθυμίαι* of Mk. iv 19.

St Matthew shews his appreciation of the narrative by inserting the particle *δή*, 'of course', in v. 23.

St Luke does much more than this. We notice his 'Pauline' addition to v. 12 (*ἵνα μὴ πιστεύσαντες σωθῶσιν*), and the *καλῆ καὶ ἀγαθῆ* and *ἐν ὑπομονῇ* of v. 15. We observe, however, that, with all his mistrust of wealth, he omits St Mark's *ἡ ἀπάτη τοῦ πλοῦτου*, and he retains *ρίζαν οὐκ ἔχουσαν* now that it is obviously a metaphor.

The next parable which the three gospels have in common is the parable of the Mustard-seed (Mk. iv 30-32, Mt. xiii 31-32, Lk. xiii 18, 19). Here St Luke's narrative is neater than St Mark's, and he seems to be following Q; Matthew, on the other hand, is a conflation of Q and Mark; but all the variations are small, and none of the Evangelists misses the point of the narrative. St Luke's version is, as usual, the most artistic, and his word *κῆπον* is a distinct improvement.* He is no doubt following³ Q in connecting this parable with the parable of the leaven, and the connexion of these two parables in this order—the surprising growth from small beginnings to the *ὄλον φύραμα*—is striking, and probably original.

A parable which furnishes us with a still better illustration of St Luke's manner of dealing with his sources is the parable of the Fig-tree (Mk. xiii 28, Mt. xxiv 32, Lk. xxi 29). St Luke notices that there is no special

¹ Cf. his vigorous handling of the saying about salt, Lk. xiv 36, 'men cast it out'.

² Perhaps St Luke has Theophilus in mind.

³ These two parables are the only parables in Luke in which the kingdom of God is explicitly compared to something.

virtue in the tree's being a fig-tree, and he widens the reference to all the trees. He lays stress on the self-evident character of the signs referred to (*βλέποντες ἀφ' ἑαυτῶν*), and on the closeness with which they will be followed by the event itself (*ἤδη*); and it is he alone who definitely states what it is that is nigh (*ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ*). St Matthew's only alteration, on the other hand, is the insertion of *πάντα* (v. 33). Perhaps he felt that he had already seen *some* of the signs and that *they* had not been followed by the end.

The last parable common to the Synoptic gospels is the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen (Mk. xii 1-12, Mt. xxi 33-46, Lk. xx 9-19). Here St Matthew treats Mark rather clumsily but in a very conservative spirit (cf. especially v. 36 with Mk. xii 5), and makes a characteristic addition at the end.¹ St Luke makes an inference as to the persons to whom the parable was spoken (*πρὸς τὸν λαόν*): shortens the account of the preparation of the vineyard: notices that the owner does not make a premature demand for the fruit (*χρόνους ἱκανούς*): increases the dramatic effect by graduating the punishments of the servants and by the rhetorical question of v. 13: introduces a remark from the bystanders²: and finally adds a solemn thought suggested to him by a passage from Daniel (Dan. ii 34), which may have been brought to his mind by our Lord's quotation of Ps. cxviii 22.

So far, the points which have been considered have scarcely been doubtful. We come to a more difficult case, however, when we consider the parable of the Strong Man armed (Mk. iii 27, Mt. xii 29, Lk. xi 21 f). Both in Matthew and Luke the parable is followed by *ὁ μὴ ὄν μετ' ἐμοῦ κατ' ἐμοῦ ἐστίν κτλ.* In the parable itself St Matthew follows Mark. Does St Luke follow Q? If so, we have another case of St Matthew's combining Mark and Q, while St Luke follows one source only (Q). It seems more probable, however, that St Luke's narrative also is based upon Mark. He recognizes the improbability of the story as he found it, and paraphrases it in such a way as to give it a Homeric sound and force.

St Matthew, then, occasionally makes an addition, especially an addition of an exegetical character,³ and he often slightly improves the style or abbreviates a little; but on the whole he is a very faithful transmitter of what he has received.

It is impossible to follow Wellhausen in reducing the number of genuine parables in Matthew to the three or four which are to be found

¹ ἄλλοις γεωργοῖς, οἵτινες ἀποδώσουσιν αὐτῷ τοὺς καρπούς—the new commonwealth of the new Israel, the Christian Church, according to the evangelist's own interpretation (v 43).

² Cf. the question of St Peter in Lk. xii 41, and the little breaks in the discourse Lk. xxi 10, 29; cf. also ix 59, xvii 37, and xiv 15.

³ e. g. Mt. xii 40 ὡς περ γὰρ ἦν Ἰωάνης τρεῖς νύκτας.

also in Mark.¹ It is true that, as he says, St Matthew's parables are 'products of reflection, not inspirations of the moment'²; but we have no reason to suppose that our Lord always spoke impromptu, and did not—as all other great teachers have done—sometimes prepare His message beforehand.

St Luke, as we have seen, uses his sources with much greater freedom than is ever displayed by St Matthew. The parables for which his source is Q furnish us with further examples of his methods as an editor.

In the parable of the Children at Play (Mt. xi 16-19, Lk. vii 31-35) several Lucan touches may be detected³: the title of John, ὁ βαπτιστής; the addition of ἄρτον and οἶνον in verse 33; the Hebraistic parallelism of verse 31; and the strengthening of the last clause (v. 35) by the introduction of πάντων.

Equally characteristic is the evangelist's treatment of the parable of the Asking Son (Lk. xi 11-13), where, according to the true text,⁴ he omits 'bread and a stone' in favour of 'an egg and a scorpion'⁵: and at the end of the passage he replaces the general term ἀγαθά by πνεῦμα ἅγιον, the gift *par excellence*.

St Luke is plainly a man who takes a keen interest in the every-day life of the world. Thus he knows that it is usual to buy sparrows at five for two farthings⁶ (Lk. xii 6) rather than at two for a farthing (Mt. x 29): he adds βορρᾶ καὶ νότου (Lk. xiii 29) to St Matthew's ἀνατολὴν καὶ δυσμῶν (Mt. viii 11)—he would not be thought to suppose that lightning passes only from east to west (Mt. xxiv 27, Lk. xvii 24): and he makes the saying about trees and their fruit (Mt. vii 16) still more apt by replacing τριβόλων by βάτον, and by using the proper word (τρυγώσιν) for the gathering of grapes (Lk. vi 44).

¹ See Denney *Expositor*, 1911, p. 135.

² It is true also that they all apply to the Christian Church, and it may be that in some cases St Matthew has given them an ecclesiastical tone; but not at the cost of any substantial alteration.

³ Notice the Rabbinical formula with which it is introduced ('The matter is like unto'—then the dative of the principal actors in the story): also the retention of τέκνων which St Matthew alters to ἔργων (cf. St Matthew's curious application of the parable of the Lost Sheep Mt. xviii 14; contrast Lk. xv 7).

⁴ Holtzmann retains the three clauses in the text and regards this as one of the instances where St Luke has three clauses to St Matthew's two. He gives two others: Lk. vi 32-34, xvii 33-36—but both these are doubtful. In the latter, the shorter text is the more probable; in the former, the passage in St Luke is so different from that in St Matthew that a comparison between them does not lead to any definite result.

⁵ Thus making both alternatives alternatives between something useful and something harmful. St Matthew in this passage seems to adhere very closely to the language of Q, Mt. vii 9-11.

⁶ Harnack asks whether sparrows had become cheaper.

One more example must suffice: the parable of the Two Houses (Mt. vii 24-27, Lk. vi 47-49). In Matthew the fault of the builder lies in his choice of sand rather than rock to build his house upon; in Luke it is his not digging deep enough on the spot which he has chosen. And St Luke's narrative is neater and clearer throughout. We are therefore prepared not to be surprised when we come to a parable like that of the Good Samaritan and find 'the Lucan form of the sentences so strongly marked that here, one feels, the evangelist must be telling the story in his own words'.¹

We must beware, however, of over-estimating the extent of St Luke's own modifications of the evangelical tradition; and we may conclude this survey of St Luke's method of using his sources by noting his preservation of a passage which he might have been expected to alter or to omit. It is a saying in xi 44 about the Pharisees, which depends on a ceremonial regulation in Num. xix 16, while the corresponding saying in Matthew (Mt. xxiii 27, 28) is independent of the Old Testament passage and considerably more in St Luke's style.

We have, therefore, little reason to suppose that any of the Synoptic parables was invented by the evangelists themselves. As Prof. Jülicher has pointed out,² no one in the earliest Church seems to have imitated our Lord in this respect. Neither St Paul in his epistles, nor St Luke among all the speeches which he reports in the Acts, gives us a single instance even of a moderately close parallel to the parables of our Lord. And the same is true of the earliest Christian literature in general: there is no sign of a disposition to compose parables.

Moreover, our examination of the editorial methods of St Matthew and St Luke suggests that the modifications introduced into the details of the parables in the course of their transmission have not thrown them out of focus. Each parable retains its original point, obscured a little in some cases perhaps, but still not easily mistaken. To decide exactly what weight should be attached to the separate features of the narrative is often a matter of great difficulty, and requires a mind saturated with the Jewish and Christian thought of the first century A. D. But it is a comparatively easy task to read the broad lessons of the Synoptic parables, and in doing so we obtain some of our surest and best-authenticated evidence of the actual teaching of our Lord.³

The Teaching of the Parables.

From what is clear and unambiguous in the parables we may obtain information as to our Lord's teaching with regard to the Kingdom of

¹ Stanton *Gospels as Historical Documents* vol. ii p. 229. 'The literary style of the whole piece (x 29-37) is admirable.'

² *Op. cit.* vol. i p. 23.

³ Cf. Jülicher *op. cit.* vol. i p. 24.

God, as to His general ethical and religious principles, and finally as to His own life and person.

(i) It is natural to start with our Lord's doctrine of the Kingdom of God. For, as Loisy says,¹ 'the idea of the Kingdom of God is, in a sense, the whole of the Gospel.'

Our Lord's preaching begins with the proclamation, 'The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand'; and it is the sentence, 'Ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of Heaven', that closes His public career and shuts the door of escape finally behind Him.² From first to last His expectation never wavers, that the Kingdom of God will come with power and will come suddenly and soon. It will not come, indeed, without warning, even as summer never comes without the tender branch and the young green leaf of the fig-tree³; nor in any arbitrary manner: it comes because the fullness of the times calls it, just as it is the carcass that attracts the vultures.⁴ But the Kingdom comes suddenly like a thief in the night,⁵ and many will be taken unawares. For there is no waiting until all are prepared. As a master returning from a journey,⁶ or from a marriage-feast,⁷ gives his servants no warning of his coming, and surprises the diligent in the midst of their work, and the drunken in the midst of their debauchery,⁸ so will the coming of the Kingdom find all men just as they are. There will be no opportunity of preparation at the last moment.⁹ And, indeed, there is no time to be lost,¹⁰ and no pains must be spared.¹¹ For there is much to be done, not for oneself, but for Him who is coming with the Kingdom,¹² the Son of Man. It is for His coming that His servants are to watch,¹³ and they must be patient.¹⁴ For them His coming is a matter of intense joy: it is a high festival,¹⁵ a marriage feast.¹⁶ But only for them. Those who

¹ *Jésus et la tradition évangélique* p. 118.

² Mk. i 15, xiv 62.

³ Mk. xiii 28 f. For an interpretation of *thépos* as 'fruit' see R. Schütz *Z. n. W.* 1909, p. 333, and 1911, p. 88. This interpretation does not of course affect the lesson of the parable.

⁴ Mt. xxiv 28. The thought that the coming of the Kingdom will mean the coming of Judgement may be reflected in this figure. Perhaps this thought also lies behind the difficult saying in Lk. xvii 21 (It is neither here nor there but in your midst (בְּקִרְבְּכֶם)) that you must look for the kingdom,—the Judgement is hanging over your own heads).

⁵ Mt. xxiv 43 f.

⁶ Mk. xiii 35.

⁷ Lk. xii 36.

⁸ Mt. xxiv 49.

⁹ The Ten Virgins, Mt. xxv 1-13.

¹⁰ 'You are already on your way to the Courts', Lk. xii 57-59.

¹¹ The Narrow Gate, Mt. vii 13 f.

¹² The Entrusted Coins, Mt. xxv 14-30, Lk. xix 11-27.

¹³ Mt. xxiv 45 f.

¹⁴ The Ten Virgins, Mt. xxv 1-13.

¹⁵ Lk. xiv 15⁻².

¹⁶ Mt. xxv 10.

are not of their number, those who are not His, have neither part nor lot in the Messianic joy. Like the man who had not on a wedding garment, they are cast into the outer darkness.¹ They may have been found in the company of the elect,² they may even be to outward appearance scarcely distinguishable from them,³ but the final separation comes at last.

Who then are these that shall be accounted worthy to stand before the Son of Man?

They are men who have caught the vision of the Kingdom of God, have seen its surpassing worth, have given all they possess to gain it,⁴ and have given it gladly.⁵ They are few in number, for though many are called few prove themselves to be such as may be chosen.⁶ They are a little flock, but it is their Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom. And if they are distinguished from the rest of the world by their devotion, so are they also by their faith. They believe that God is working, though they themselves are not in a position to effect anything; and that when the time is ripe for the Kingdom there will not be a moment's delay.⁷

In the meantime they do not give way to discouragement. The beginning may be minute,⁸ but that only makes the more striking the greatness of the end.⁹ What is being done may be done silently, but it is done thoroughly.¹⁰

These are the inner circle of the elect, who will one day sit on thrones¹¹ judging the twelve tribes of Israel. They have counted the cost,¹² and have banded themselves together to pray day and night to God that He will bring in the Kingdom that shall right their wrongs.¹³ The crisis demands importunate prayer, and prayer of that kind cannot fail to be effectual.¹⁴

But there is also an outer circle of the elect who are going on with the ordinary work of life.¹⁵ The men are in the field: the women are

¹ Mt. xxii 11-14.

² Mt. xiii 47-50.

³ Mt. xiii 24 ff.

⁴ The Pearl of Great Price, Mt. xiii 45, 46.

⁵ The Treasure hid in a Field, Mt. xiii 44.

⁶ Mt. xxii 14.

⁷ The Seed growing Secretly, Mk. iv 26-29.

⁸ As minute as their own faith, Mk. iv 31, Lk. xvii 6.

⁹ The Mustard Seed, Mk. iv 30-32.

¹⁰ The Leaven, Mt. xiii 33.

¹¹ Lk. xxii 30. Mt. xix 28 limits the number of thrones to Twelve. Later tradition seems to have lost sight of the fact that there were others 'about Him with the Twelve', Mk. iv 10.

¹² Lk. xiv 28-30. The Tower-builder. Lk. xiv 31-33. The King going to War.

¹³ Lk. xviii 1-8. The Widow and the Unrighteous Judge.

¹⁴ Lk. xi 5-8. The Importunate Friend.

¹⁵ Mk. v 19.

grinding at the mill.¹ What is the difference between *them* and the rest of the world?

It is first of all that they have repented in obedience to the message² of the new Prophet. Who He is they are not quite sure: He is more like Elijah than any one else of whom they can think³; at any rate He is no mere visionary. And the second thing which distinguishes them from other people is that they try to follow out His teaching in their lives.⁴ He insists on the impossibility of serving both God and mammon,⁵ and on the supreme importance of an undefiled heart.⁶ He promises that earnestness shall be rewarded,⁷ and especially earnestness in prayer.⁸ Profession is vain without practice, He often says⁹; and yet no works can earn 'merit',¹⁰ but men must rather put their whole trust in the grace of God which is divinely free.¹¹ It is love that God asks from them in return for His forgiveness,¹² and the ready forgiveness of *their* brethren.¹³ The love of God yearns specially over the lost¹⁴ and welcomes them with a joy which the self-complacent religious cannot understand.¹⁵ But God's invitations can be refused, and often are.¹⁶

(ii) The study of the Parables alone is enough to shew that our Lord's Ethic is no mere 'interim' Ethic, and that His moral sense is not obscured by the shadow of Eschatology.

There is, for instance, nothing eschatological in the great group of parables peculiar to the third gospel.

The folly of self-centred luxury¹⁷ and its inevitable consequences,¹⁸ the duty of neighbourliness,¹⁹ the humility of true prayer,²⁰ equally remain

¹ Mt. xxiv 40, 41.

² Mk. i 15.

³ Mk. viii 28.

⁴ His commands are 'commands which free the life and do not, like those of the Jewish Law, cramp and stifle it.' Wellhausen *Einleitung* p. 166.

⁵ Mt. vi 24, Lk. xvi 13.

⁶ Mk. vii 15.

⁷ Mt. vii 7. Ask, Seek, Knock.

⁸ Mt. vii 9-11. The Asking Son.

⁹ Mt. vii 24-27. The Two Houses. Mt. xxi 28-32. The Two Sons.

¹⁰ Lk. xvii 7-10. After the Day's Work.

¹¹ Mt. xx 1-16. The Surprising Wages.

¹² Lk. vii 36-50. The Creditor and the Two Debtors.

¹³ Mt. xviii 21-35. The Unmerciful Servant.

¹⁴ Lk. xv 3-10. The Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin. 'No one before Him had foretold that the Kingdom of God would be a kingdom of converted malefactors.' Dewick *Eschatology* p. 171.

¹⁵ Lk. xv 11-32. The Lost Son and his Elder Brother. See *Ecce Homo* p. 155.

¹⁶ Lk. xiv 15-24. The Unwilling Guests.

¹⁷ Lk. xii 16-21. The Rich Fool.

¹⁸ Lk. xvi 19-31. The Rich Man and Lazarus.

¹⁹ Lk. x 29-37. The Good Samaritan. See *Ecce Homo* p. 123. A careful reading of Sir J. R. Seeley's work is indispensable to the study of this aspect of our Lord's teaching.

²⁰ Lk. xviii 9-14. The Pharisee and the Publican.

lessons for 'this age', whether the end of it is in sight or not. And these lessons are taught with impressive calmness and with extraordinary insight. In the same quiet, unhurried manner, our Lord speaks of benevolence as the light of the soul,¹ and of beneficence as the fruit of genuine goodness.² He gives advice with regard to behaviour at feasts, and the invitation of guests,³ and an admonition to would-be reformers of their brethren.⁴

(iii) But, further, a careful reading of the parables gives us valuable information concerning our Lord's own Life and Person.

He was not another John the Baptist,⁵ and if His message sounded a note of warning it also sounded a note of joy. He was no ascetic. His relation to His disciples was a glad, even a festive, relation—the relation of the bridegroom to the sons of the bridechamber.⁶ Those who followed Him were filled with a new spirit which could not be expected to submit to the bondage of Rabbinical regulations.⁷ He Himself did not conform to the traditional rules concerning fasting,⁸ the keeping of the Sabbath,⁹ and ceremonial ablutions.¹⁰ Nor did He despise, as many of the Rabbis did, the common people (the עַם הָאָרֶץ). It was primarily to such lost sheep of the house of Israel that our Lord had come.¹¹ The nation as a whole was under sentence of doom if it did not repent,¹² and there was a great need for His mission.¹³ The need was greatest in the case of those who were most lost, the publicans and sinners.¹⁴ Even to these the grace of God extended, though the Pharisees begrudged it them.¹⁵

The Pharisees themselves were more occupied with saying than with doing,¹⁶ and with the outward more than with the inward.¹⁷ The prejudice with which they were filled had blinded them even to the significance of our Lord's new and wonderful works¹⁸; whereas no scribe ought to consider himself well instructed unless his treasury

¹ Mt. vi 22 f.

³ Lk. xiv 7-11.

⁵ Mt. xi 16-19. Children at Play.

⁷ Mk. ii 21, 22. The Patch: the Old Skins and the New Wine.

⁸ Mk. ii 18.

² Mt. vii 16-20.

⁴ Lk. vi 41, 42.

⁶ Mk. ii 18-20.

⁹ Mk. ii 23 (and n.b. Mt. xii 5 and 7).

¹⁰ Mk. vii 14-19. The defilement referred to is that incurred by eating food with unwashed hands, not that which is contracted by the use of unclean animals. But the note, 'This He said, making all meats clean', is no more than a logical application of the principle which our Lord lays down.

¹¹ Mt. xv 24. —and to them rather than to the Gentiles.

¹² Lk. xiii 6-9. The Barren Fig-tree.

¹³ Mt. ix 37. The Plenteous Harvest.

¹⁴ Mk. ii 17. The Physician and the Sick.

¹⁵ Lk. xv 28.

¹⁶ Mt. xxi 28-32. The Two Sons.

¹⁷ Mk. vii 14-23.

¹⁸ The Beelzebub Parables, Mk. iii 22-26, 27; Mt. xii 43-45.

contained things new as well as things old.¹ It was not surprising that so much of the religious teaching of the day was futile.²

Our Lord Himself, indeed, met with but limited success. But the fault lay not in Himself or in His message, but in the inward state of those to whom He spoke.³ Many refused His call,⁴ and some who did not actually refuse proved to be unworthy of it.⁵ A true acceptance of the call involved sacrifice⁶; it required a steadiness of purpose,⁷ and a settled determination⁸ which had counted the cost: because the disciples were not above their Master⁹ and their Master had come to know that He would pay His life as the price of the abolition of the old order of things.¹⁰

The proverbs, 'Physician, heal thyself'¹¹ and 'A prophet hath no honour in his own country',¹² testify to our Lord's lack of success in His native town, and to the peculiar disappointment which this occasioned Him.¹³

And, finally, it is only in the light of our Lord's conception of His peculiar and intimate relation to God, such as is reflected in the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen,¹⁴ that the gospels become comprehensible and coherent. For 'it is not the Messianic expectation of the Jews, or the Hellenistic philosophy, or the upward movement of the lower classes, or the religious societies of the time,—it is none of these that explains the origin of Christianity, . . . but solely the person of Jesus'.¹⁵

J. W. HUNKIN.

¹ Mt. xiii 52.

² Mt. xv 14. The Blind as Leaders of the Blind.

³ Mk. iv 3-9. The Fate of the Seed. Mt. vii 6. Pearls before Swine.

⁴ Lk. xiv 15-24. The Unwilling Guests.

⁵ Mt. xxii 11-14. The Man without the Wedding Garment.

⁶ Mk. viii 34. The Cross.

⁷ Mt. viii 22. The Dead to bury their Dead. Lk. ix 62. The Hand to the Plough.

⁸ Lk. xiv 28-33.

⁹ Mt. x 24 f.

¹⁰ Mk. xii 1-12. The Wicked Husbandmen.

¹¹ Lk. iv 23.

¹² Mk. vi 4.

¹³ We can also glean from the parables some information concerning the life of the disciples. Thus Lk. x 7 (The Labourer and his Hire) throws light upon their means of subsistence while on their mission to the 'cities of Israel'. While the incident which gave rise to the saying about Kings and Tribute (Mt. xvii 25) seems to imply that they had not altogether given up their ordinary occupations.

¹⁴ Mk. xii 1-12.

¹⁵ W. Bousset in *Was wissen wir von Jesu?* quoted by G. Hollmann *Theolog. Rundschau*, 1904, p. 254.