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PARABLE

Parable is not just a kind of story but a way of looking at things. Usually what people experience as important and real cannot be summed up in a neat statement but can only be pointed to. Parable invites people to look, or even jars people so that they can look, at things in a way they had never tried or perhaps not been able to look before. Jesus used parable to speak of the kingdom and so it is worth pondering the significance of the parabolic mode. This issue of ARC explores parable as word and action.

IMAGES OF PREACHING AND THEOLOGY OF IMAGINATION

In preaching we are tempted to use images either as "illustrations" - a handy story that makes the didactic point in a vivid way; or as "exemplars" - those allegories which serve as moral examples of what we mean. Stories from the Bible are unfortunately relegated to this allegorical device of the homiletic art. It has been debunked wonderfully by F.C. Crews in The Pooh Perplex. In his chapter "O Felix Culpa! The Sacramental Meaning of Winnie-the-Pooh", he displays a wicked imagination as he analyses the allegorical and typological significance of Eyeore's role as Saviour. "The chapter, 'Eyeore has a Birthday' is a charming parallel to the coming of the Magi, with Piglet and Pooh's balloon and pot forming a primitive but nonetheless heartfelt equivalent to frankincense and myrrh ... The giving of his own breakfast of thistles to Tigger reminds us of the Loaves and Fishes, but at the same time, to judge from Tigger's reaction, serves as a reminder that the path to Heaven is thorny. His breaking of Tigger's *fall from a tree* (italics mine) is, in contrast, a very *exemplum* of the Atonement, while his later contemplation of three sticks forming the letter 'A' is an icon at once of the Trinity and the three Cardinal Virtues ..."

So can the imagination run rampant apart from some control, what our fathers called the "archetype" or "archetypal analogue". With Crews' warning in mind, we need to explore a theology of imagination, of those images proper to Christian preaching. The trouble is, traditional theology operated with only two elements in its dialectic: reason and will. Thus was born the battle between faith and love (or faith and "works"); the vital third term - *hope* with its images of future possibility - was missing. It was linked to the emotions, those "passions" banned from the rationalism of theology, because they were too suggestive, too unsettling and disturbing. John Dillenberger has remarked that "Protestant rationalism has all but destroyed imagination within the church" and that only an encounter between theology and the arts will restore the rightful place of the imagination. Protestantism has indeed much to answer for, in its rejection of the medieval emphasis on hope, since it hardened the debate between justification by faith/works to which Counter-Reformation responded in kind.

If we are to break out of the sterile debates of "classical theism" it will be only through imaginative constructs providing an alternative horizon. For instance, the classic debate over "faith and works" was in fact a medieval debate long before Luther's hour made it crucial. Even then it turned on a different point: whether the faithful one was united with Christ or not. This "mystical union of believers with Christ" (e.g. preface to Luther's commentary on Galations) was quickly lost as the battle lines were drawn over faith/works or reason/will. Hope was lost. The mystical heart of the matter was forgotten. The way of seeing things was narrowed.

Such theological myopia is corrected only by imaginative vision: better "ways of seeing". The problem of *perception* is the key to theories of knowledge. This became crystal clear with the Empiricists when Locke began philosophizing by examining the human eye to understand what "seeing" is. Affected by this tradition, an aesthetic theory developed in England - Ruskin, Shelley, Thomas Hardy all were fascinated by the phenomenon of "seeing". There are modes of seeing, differing sorts of vision whereby one's percepts grasp differing aspects of the "object". On the continent, Rilke talked about "inseeing" *(Einsehen)* which allows one to get inside and appreciate the object as divine creation.

We are familiar with the contrast between seeing and hearing - in biblical studies, for instance, much is made of this contrast between the visual and the acoustic; faith comes by hearing. The famous motto which J.G. Hamann extolled, "Speak that I may see thee!" expresses the model best. This paradigm of hearing provides corrective to our Western epistemology of seeing. It can be linked with that alternative mode of "inseeing" suggested above. Origen, for example, following the threefold meaning of texts, located the highest in a sort of "enoptics", a grasping of essence through a mystical union of love with the Beloved. Thus he placed the Song of Songs at the centre of this modality of knowing-inseeing-loving.

Now John Calvin belongs to this tradition more than Calvinists have allowed. He should be placed, as Quirinus Breen does, in "the rhetorical tradition". This has a long history, including the Renaissance feeling for metaphor, for the indirect expression of reality's mysterious depth. When the Reformers developed their hermeneutic they recognized that scripture means *sign*, a pointing and a correspondence but also a distance and unlikeness. Thus they accepted the Thomist concept of analogy as the formal way to describe the relationship. They related this, of course, to another concept somewhat in disgrace in modern times but well worthy of respect: *typology*. This may descend to mere allegory (Justin Martyr saw the Cross typified every time the O.T. mentions a stick of wood!); it requires control. Hence the Reformation debates about the order of analogy, the archetypal or analogating Analogue which determines the "scope" of the ectypal forms.

The *material* or dynamic of this archetype was the drama of salvation. For once the dramatic modality is wedded to that of perception; an alternative paradigm of knowing is available. Now we can apprehend the role of imagination. Suzanne Langer (a follower of Cassirer's theory of Symbols) has remarked that the "literary mode is the mode of Memory; the dramatic is the mode of Destiny". The power of *Poesis* (that "making" which the imagination performs to produce its images) is that it creates "a virtual history" - roughly what *Heilsgeschichte* intended to mean. But whereas literature recalls us to a virtual past to which we may return through imaginative transference, *drama's* focus is not on words but on actions, so that a "virtual life" is created which catches us up on its way toward the future. Destiny is conveyed through the dramatic pull, the issues of life and death (or, in the Christian Drama, death and Life).

Whenever the Bible is taken as mere history we miss the power of its dramatic mode. Whenever it is taken as mere other-worldliness we pervert this mode into fantasy or escape. Only when we see that history is the stage on which the divine-human drama is being "played" do we appreciate the norms and forms of biblical imagery. Scripture can have only a "functional" authority - it proves itself by what it does in its proper context. This means not only the context of what sort of literature it is (i.e. a script for acting rather than a book for reading) but also the situation of the committed congregation who have turned up in proper mind and dress for the Play. If there is power in the scriptural text it will not be appreciated by sticking within the old debate about "inspiration" (e.g. are the vowels inspired as well as the Hebrew consonants?). That debate traded on the same old Aristotelian coinage which provided the capital for the doctrine of transubstantiation. "Fundamentalism" saw (sees?) the text as self-substantiating, fixed in meaning and not really "significant". The historical-critical method breaks the text open, supplying the basis for a hermeneutic of the text as sign, recovering its dynamic, its power to show new things. This "heuristic" purpose is what Paul Ricoeur refers to when he speaks of the text as "showing its world" to the seeker.

INTERPRETING PARABLES

Images in preaching are more allegorical than parabolical, was the opening charge of this essay. Taken as example stories of model human behaviour, they are striking ways of what *could* be put more prosaically - as the preacher does in his commentary. But: what if they are properly or "literally" metaphorical, a sort of dramatic discourse intended not as exemplary or allegorical by-play but as stimulus or occasion for imaginative response, what we would today term role-playing? This is the suggestion, at least, of some scholarly work on texts, notably parables, being done today. One finds it exemplified in the "structuralist" approach, although like most labels this covers too much ground to indicate any definite school. In various ways it is expressed by Dan Via's book *The Parables* and his more recent *Kerygma and Comedy in the N.T.*; by Ricoeur's subtle reasoning on the "poetics" of interpretation; by Northrop Frye's rubric that the Bible belongs to the genre of "romantic comedy"; and in particular by recent exegesis of parables by Robert Funk (e.g. in the new journal *Semeia*, of which Robert Culley is an associate editor).

Central to Funk's approach is the fact that *genre* is a cultural medium, shared within a linguistic community; it relates therefore to a "communications model". This seems to me a good step beyond the approach of linguistic analysis (performatives, forms of life) and folklorist tradition (archetypes, patterns). It recognizes the formative role of the linguistic community, but also distinguishes that special sort of reforming protest called parable, that story which subverts the stable world of mythology, so that new possibilities emerge.

Take the parable of The Good Samaritan - as Funk takes it. It is no longer an example story with a "meaning" or lesson, explaining what it means to be a good neighbour. This moralistic misuse of scripture is familiar on this continent especially; it is the essence of our "civil religion", the reduction of spirituality to ethics, and of ethics to social idealism. Hollywood entitles it Good Neighbour Sam. Meanwhile, back at the town square, Jesus is telling a story with more than a punch line. His narrative has a sinister intention ("sinister" means "left-handed", remember); it wants to locate its hearers in a position from which they will see things from a new perspective. This story in particular "draws" us into the ditch with the victim on the Jericho Road. "By chance a priest passing by ..."; what a line for the anti-clerical types (they probably applauded the harsh caricature of the guilty priest stepping out of the way) - but the clerical sympathizers, at the same time, would be aroused to protest, to say hold on a minute, something's wrong! Thus the audience is divided (in the Greek: *crisis*). So also the Levite gets to pass by, and the division increases, with role-play going well enough to delight the heart of any modern groupie.

Then a certain Samaritan has compassion ... here is the shock, the sudden upset, the reversal of roles. And here is the warning for ourselves, not to switch roles so that we have a moral tale for *goyim*, so that the identity of the Samaritan is simply a good guy (or *goy!*). No; this is a story of the Jew and his mortal enemy, and its point is that when you - even though God's chosen one - are victimized, disinherited, down and out, you must give yourself up to *mercy*, despite your revulsion at the status and identity of the merciful "neighbour".

So the pleasant and familiar little tale becomes dynamite, as Jesus intended. To "understand" it means to let it draw you inside its meaning so that you are changed. Role-playing suggests something always unfinished, always ready to "tell" itself over again. Perhaps the old motto that "translation is betrayal" has little weight; perhaps only by the transference of the narrative to another language which preserves its idiom do we preserve and guarantee its power. Then the question is not, who is my neighbour? so much as, who is *our* Samaritan? That way we may glimpse something of the grotesque form which mercy may take.

The interpretation of parables is one way of showing how theological hermeneutics leads us back to what should have been our perennial concern: *story*. In part, our loss of the equation of Gospel with story (or, as we shall see, Story) is explained by the nature of the subject. It is like the prosaic commentary on poetry: not quite appropriate, even if necessary. So the inappropriateness of theology to communicate its subject: an irony that the great theologians have always appreciated (Calvin often spoke of the *improprietas* of theology; he could even say that of Bible too, in which God "babbles" because of our weakness. If theology is inappropriate, a commentary on what is itself a sort of baby-talk, little wonder there is confusion

about communicating the Gospel). Although this is also a theme of Karl Barth, I prefer to close this section with reference to another, quite different, Barth. The American novelist John Barth has Scheherezade say (in *Chimera*, based on the story of that fabulous story-teller): "Making love and telling stories both take more than *good technique* - but it's only the technique that we can *talk* about".

STORIES AND STORY

"In myths and fairytales, as in dreams, the psyche tells its own story, and the interplay of the archetypes is revealed in its natural setting, as formation, transformation; the eternal Mind's eternal recreation". C.G. Jung's break with Freud's interpretation of dreams on behalf of a less sexological, more archetypical theory, is reflected in these words of his. Jung's contribution has been to link imagination with unconscious, and so with that perennial pattern of myth through which we communicate the meaning of our life together. Because we share such a depth pattern, we recognize (that is, re-cognize) the elemental "types" of human being. Some interpreters, such as von Franz, consider fairytales a purer form than the elaborated myth and legend, so that through the primitive or childish tale we grasp "the basic patterns of the psyche" more clearly.

One "school" that has influenced this area recently is that British group of writers who gathered in Oxford for some decades. Chief were C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams and J.R.R. Tolkien. Relaxing at the Lamb & Flag they listened to each other's novels in progress, or discussed what Lewis calls Story. He insists that what "stories" awaken is half-forgotten longing related to *Story:* "the inconsolable secret in each of you - the secret which hurts so much that you take revenge on it by calling it names like Nostalgia and Romanticism and Adolescence ... the secret we cannot hide and cannot tell, though we desire to do both" *(The Weight of Glory)*.

What those writers had in common was a sense of imagination's power in constructing "possible worlds", combined with a sense of the presence of God, involving imagination's reflection of his primary creation. Tolkien's brilliant little essay *On Fairy Stories* reminds us that the realm of Faërie is not chiefly about fairies, elves or giants but about "the Perilous Realm". The genre of "fantasy" is chosen because only such a "subcreation" can imitate primary creation in order to do just what we saw parable do: provide the shock of a fresh perspective, the revelation of new possibilities. Tolkien notes that traditional fairytales have happy endings, the sudden turn of events he calls "eucatastrophe". "Tragedy is the true form of Drama, its highest function; but the opposite is true of Fairy-Story. Since we do not possess a word that expresses this opposite - I will call it Eucatastrophe. The eucatastrophic tale is the true form of fairy-tale, and its highest function". This turning is the critical point, at which the "web of story" shines through, revealing the gleam of *glory*.

In the case of C.S. Lewis, his imaginative world-constructs served an apologetic purpose, although he claims that this was relatively accidental. "What might Christ become like, if there really were a world like Narnia and he chose to be incarnate and die and rise again in *that* world as he has actually done in ours?" To this question he provides "an imaginary answer" by supplying his "invention" of Aslan, the leonine Christ-type of the seven Narnia chronicles. Like parable, fairytale or fantasy allows the unexpected to seize us with the dynamic of discovery. Aslan, for instance, creates perplexity among the children who love and follow him, until they learn: "Of course he isn't *safe*. But he's good!" Again, asked why people seem so moved by the passion story of Narnia, Lewis replied: "the reason why the Passion of Aslan sometimes moves people more than the real story in the Gospels is ... that it takes them off their guard. In reading the real story, the fatal knowledge that one *ought* to feel in a certain way often inhibits the feeling". And near the end of the series, when Aslan tells Lucy and Edmund that they can never return to Narnia they protest:

> "It isn't Narnia, you know" sobbed Lucy. "It's you. We shan't meet *you* there. And how can we live, never meeting you?"
> "But you *shall* meet me, dear one", said Aslan.
> "Are - are you *there* too, Sir?" said Edmund.
> "I am," said Aslan. "But there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name. This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there."

So the adventures in Narnia are both type and parable - a way of telling Gospel in different form while preserving its idiom, and so providing the occasion for its dynamic to operate.

This "dynamic" indicates the formal pattern, the imaginative construct which typifies human being, human journey. Whether it is well and truly "applied" or not (to use our fathers' word for the sermon's third point) may be subject to other rules (doctrine of Holy Spirit, predestination, etc.); but without the appropriate exegesis and imaginative re-telling, the dynamic of Story would not even have its chance. So although our remarks are not intended to cover the entire ground (to tell the whole story) they are meant as prelude, therapy to proceed in appropriate modes of response. What I mean is the sort of relevance of the parabolic to the hearer. Rosemary Haughton has put it well: "To be baptised ... means to be chosen to preach the resurrection. It means to be the youngest son, to have a built-in personal princess, and a whole range of wise animals to provide guidance in sticky situations. But it also means being sent on the usual arduous and unpredictable quest, all set about with witches and ogres. And it means going on to the end because there is a future, which is also a bridal, and a happy-ever-after, however unlikely that may seem at certain stages of the way there" *(Tales from Eternity)*.

Parable, like analogy, is a matter of likeness and unlikeness. The tension between the two (spark and arc again!) creates the power, the creative movement which changes things, charging them with significance. Such polarization of the "object" in question thus transfers itself to the "subject". The trick of parable - and so the trick of parabolic preaching - is not to stand still, not to cater to assumptions and traditions which hold down the truth in unimagination. But to create gaps and jumps and forced decisions and shocking images. This "way of negation and affirmation of images" was familiar to medieval scholars, none more than to Dante. The way of unlikeness, the descent through broken images, comes first so that imagination may be cleansed and the mind prepared for the strange new truth of the Godspell. Then the way of likeness, the affirmation of images, weaves its proper "spell", so that its spell-binding work may lead the reluctant Knight of Faith toward his goal. "He is the Way. Follow Him through the Land of Unlikeness: you will see rare beasts, and have unique adventures. He is the Truth. Seek him in the Kingdom of Anxiety: you will come to a great city that has expected your return for years. He is the Life. Love him in the world of the Flesh: And at your marriage all its occasions shall dance for joy" (W.H. Auden, *For the Time Being*).

Let Charles Williams have the last word: he deserves it for his sense of imagination, quite in the noble line of Coleridge. For Williams, the mind is most itself - most reasonable - when the imagination is playing with and through that complex of images yielded by the great tradition of Christian theology. He sees reality as the coinherence of natural and supernatural, requiring a dynamic and many-dimensioned model to convey its richness. In novels and plays he explored this model, with its key theme of substituted love, the free acceptance of another's suffering. It was, of course, the Incarnation which guided Williams' imaginative journey through the struggle of good with evil, the "glory" that works through all creation, so that even the corruption and malice of the world are unwilling partners in the drama of God. Christopher Fry was influenced by Williams, and his "seasonal comedies" in particular display this theme: the dark *is* light enough!

In this essay the parables have served a dual purpose. As Jesus' own chief teaching method they demand attention in their own terms; as signs of the peculiar identity of the Teacher they bear a special burden. When we turn to Story we see the same duality, the intrinsic pattern which in turn directs us to examine the deeper question of Pattern. If traditional discussions of the concept of analogy and the criteria for exegesis seem somewhat outdated or lacking in power, it may well be that such themes as we have touched on will prove better guides today. Just as the recognition of the *liturgical* setting of Jewish and Christian Story enlightens meaning, so does the deliberate turn to imagination allow better play of images that broaden horizon and deepen understanding. And if Western theology especially has tended to misunderstand the power of icons for good as well as evil, a theology of imagination will help us recover our balance in our search for - John Calvin again - the "least improper" images for preaching and teaching.

Note: This essay draws on material presented to the Knox College Alumni seminars, May 1976. References include S. Langer, *Feeling and Form;* Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil;* Northrop Frye, *The Educated Imagination; Semeia* 2; *Theology Today,* July 1975.

J.C. McLelland

HOCKEY, WAR, AND SHAKESPEARE vs JESUS

To a Canadian watching the Stanley Cup it is really rather irrelevant to discuss hockey as a parable about the nature of war. Chances are he's too busy experiencing the game to be distracted by considerations of its cultural implications. A child growing up in this country learns to understand the game as a whole. He may be able to articulate an understanding of the game but that understanding is never more than academic if he has not been quickened by the game. In other words the understanding exists to support the game. To hockey players, generation after generation are given the secrets of the game. What is that secret? Through much practice the mind helps the body flesh out the game. The game becomes flesh and dwells among us full of violence and powerful alliances. How is hockey like war? A game matured by understanding projects the loyalties of the body of citizens in the modern struggling city-state. Through this shared activity struggle, conflict and even violence are set free of their pejorative definitions. There is no need to discuss the meaning of the game because we are too busy being involved in the activity of the game and its all-pervasive presence eight months of the year.

Hockey happens to be one of the most powerful theatrical events in this country. Along with Americans and their football, it provides activity that by its very playing out in our daily lives releases in us a dramatic understanding of who we are. But this act of theatre with its built-in critical awareness depends on a highly complex technology that faithfully re-creates the realism of the arena theatre in a projected image in our living rooms. In fact most people today are so dependent on this technology that upon viewing a piece of theatre from sport to a movie they measure its truthfulness (i.e. validity) in terms of its realistic recreation of the actual experience. This voyeuristic thirst is quenched only by attention to detail. The meat of the action is believed when supported by the right table from the right period or close-ups on fans at the game. In contrast Jesus did not have at his disposal the various media monsters allowing him to tour the countryside with his pithy little stories faithfully pinned down to the right choice of detail visually projected so the audience would believe. Neither did he try to fatten his stories with verisimilitudinous descriptions to permeate the members of his audience with the mood of the piece. The parables are curiously devoid of such artistic dilly-dallying. Each image centre of each parable is not reduced to a visual construct based on detail. He had no need to validate the image of "the farmer", because he had the freedom of an oral tradition in which words themselves are images setting free each man's experience as opposed to their being blue prints for a world only believable when projected as a fleshed out image.

Most people, if they chance to think about the theatre, picture it as a building with a stage, lights, costumes, a lobby with a bar, and actors. More caustically, the official theatre of today is a high-culture event for an elitist population that can afford the season's tickets.

William Shakespeare in his day, fashioned plays of blood, guts, and thunder because he was living in a world in which people were touching that every day. The spilling of blood caused by anything from passion through battle to criminal behaviour was not hidden from the eyes of the public. The multiple murders in Hamlet and MacBeth seem improbable to us today and are at best ascented to only in literary terms. If Richard Nixon in the madness of his resignation were seen running half naked and wild on the beaches of California he immediately would be committed as sick confirming our worst suspicions. Yet we glibly go to the theatre and watch a King Lear run mad on a heath cavorting with fools, dispossessed feudal lords, and tortured sons. It is impossible to understand King Lear as anything other than a literary activity in a world where unreason and madness are quickly wiped out of the way by the medical police. In the same way it is a literary affectation to discuss a would-be sower wandering through his field in a world where crops are produced hydroponically and where all that most of us know of a carrot is a perfectly shaped orange cylinder subtly conical steaming with delight as it receives the gracious coating of melted butter.

The theatre, when best understood, sets us free of the moment by moment analysis of life (the eating of carrots, the watching of hockey and distant wars) and gives to us some overview from which to appreciate the nature of time. The very process itself as it is performed is a parable about the nature of time. Before and after the time warp of the play, much discussion might take place as to the meaning, ie. the set of ideas hidden in the play, but then there is the play itself. If, in watching a play you are always predisposed to being only conscious of it as a parable or in a deleterious way asked to constantly figure out the ideas while you are watching it, you would never watch it. This desire to make understanding prime and all actions the servant of understanding destroys the very nature of the theatre. Very few people go to the theatre today to be affected by an action. In most cases it is a fascination with spectacle, the How of the production (lights and costumes).

Theatre allows us to understand the passage of time and by extension allows us to understand the nature of history. A battle can pass in two minutes which in measured time of daily living may take five years whereas an interpersonal scene which, in our daily living sense of time is measurably only five minutes may be expanded into a twenty minute scene. In other words the theatre deals with the affect of actions as opposed to a faithful recreation of the act.

Now in the history of the theatre, a fundamental point that earmarks the success of the art form in any given age is the ability to distract people from the preoccupation of time as a measurement of reality. Through expert editing and rehearsal of that edited construct the audience member is set free of his constant reconsideration of his methods of sustaining his existence from "where do I get the next piece of bread?" to "where do we find three million dollars to lay the foundations for this next university building?"

Reproducing the world as we know it from daily bread to trips to the moon reflects our fundamental bondage to time. Jesus, the Messiah, unassuming theatre artist that he was, knew that if you're going to get people to at least listen, if not to hear, it is essential to embrace people at the gut level of their life. Jesus took the oldest theatrical form, a simple story, and told it in such a way that the world as known was not reproduced but most often done away with, criticized, wiped out. If perchance he was feeling in a positive mood, he would hint at apocalyptic possibilities, or in other words reveal a world by means of metaphor that would be reborn out of this groaning tired mess that war had made.

The parable of the sower, beyond the expectation I am sure of Jesus himself, has grown a field of the wildest variety of unnourishing plants that the world has ever seen. In the church they're called sermons. If you had been following such a man as Jesus you could not fall back on your Christology to understand him. In the same sense you could read all the books in the

world on hockey, but then there's the game. Please understand I am not talking about blind leaps of faith in a belief-starved world of suicides and Kierkegaards.

Jesus knew that many of the people following him did not have enough to eat. So why did he spend three-quarters of that simple narrative to talk about bad farming techniques? When you live in New York you get to the point where you wish you were mugged so you could stop worrying about its potential happening. New York like Jerusalem is the idolatrous capital of North America. Imagine trying to make the parable of the Good Samaritan into a feature length film in a world where the police and the mugger are all that we are worried about. It is romantic foolishness to talk of blank cheques to help strangers in distress in a world cancerous with welfare organizations.

When the parable ceases to be a piece of theatre and becomes a thinly disguised idea it is ostensibly dead, a dead form housing a dead content which is dead because we have killed it. Romantic sermonizing, like expensive productions of Shakespeare's plays reduces the bile and conflict of the original material to pablum and pap. Without the eschaton of Christ's death and the apocalypse of his resurrection his teachings become irrelevant, because given the new age they talk about, they do not fit into the forms and traditions of the history of the theatre, neither do they align themselves to the history of literature as preached by the doctors of criticism.

Shakespeare, God rest his confused agnostic soul, remains popular because the constructs he set up are irrelevant today. Recreation of his work is a safe way to invest the money allotted to culture. In contrast Jesus in his teaching through parables is not a mind seeking to realize its identity through self-expression. The parables represent facets, fragments of the event of a world yet to happen which will be revealed when God Himself chooses to set us totally free of the bondage of time. Their fascination for a man in Jesus' day is not that they made sense. He kept coming back because they didn't make sense. He kept listening and listening and thought he was hearing but later, out of the range of Christ's charisma he was left with the story that did not fit into the understanding he had collected up to that point about life.

Now and then Christ is reputed to have given essays or explications of these stories, but only to a handful of people who had watched him often enough to have some inkling of what he was saying. Until such time as these parables are activated, ie. God has actualized his new age and new earth, we are all, to some extent, outside the Kingdom. The secret of the parable is not theological, but theatrical. The secret of the parable is secret: hidden inside those people who preserve the earth from total death and prepare the world for an age when truth will no longer be an endless discussion of layers of an onion going nowhere.

So all you ministers get out your shovels and dig up the field (the world) and try to find that treasure. Put Jesus on display. Expose him. Cut him up. Don't hide his parts from the world. Perhaps if we think hard enough we won't have to put up with his resurrection. After all why give up the long re-run of our favourite play, the Crucifixion.

Louis Capson

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MATTHEW 19

Once a young rich man came to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what must I do to acquire this new quality of life that you live?"

And Jesus asked him if he had kept the commandments 5 through 9. "Yes," he replied, "I have tried to live a good and moral life."

"Well," said Jesus, "what about the 10th commandment, the one concerning coveting. You are very rich you know. Why don't you give your money away and come with me?"

But the young man could not bear to give up his riches.

So Jesus seeing his sorrow said, "O well, why don't you keep your money and come along anyway. Maybe we can work out some kind of compromise. Maybe you will gradually come to the point where you can give up some of your wealth. In any case, you are very rich and we can use your support in getting our mission established. Whatever you feel you can give will be O.K."

And the young rich man said to Jesus, "Gee, that's really great! You're a good fellow, Lord!"

John Congram
St. Giles, Sarnia

THE PARABLES: A BRIEF BIBLIOGRAPHY

C.H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom.* Scribner's, 3rd ed., 1961.

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Jeremias' purpose is to get back to the parables as they came from the lips of Jesus. He uses the formcritical method and his wide knowledge of 1st century Palestine to accomplish this aim. That he has given us a great deal of new insight into the background of the parables and of the way they were used in the oral period, goes without saying. Even if they do not agree with his conclusions, scholars acknowledge their debt to Jeremias.

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The first two sections of this book give a good historical introduction to the method of parable interpretation. The third section interprets the parables existentially.

Amos N. Wilder, *Early Christian Rhetoric: The Language of the Gospel.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1871.

Deals with the various literary modes and genres that are found in the N.T. The chapter on the Parables is worth the price of the book. The Introduction to this second edition is no less valuable.

R.W. Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic, and the Word of God.*

Although concerned with a much wider use of language than its parabolic use, the chapter on "The Parable as Metaphor," is well worth reading.

Dan O. Via, *The Parables: Their Literary and Existential Dimension.* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967.

As the title implies, Via is not concerned with the historical approach to the parables, and indeed, has some strong *caveats* against this approach. He considers the parables as aesthetic objects, which have been carefully thought out and carefully expressed. Here he is greatly influenced by modern literary theories. The second part of the book discusses the parables in literary terms, e.g., as tragic or comic parables, and interprets them existentially.

J.D. Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus.* New York: Harper & Row, 1973.

Crossan brings to his interpretation of the parables both a wise knowledge of literary criticism, including poetic criticism, and of historical criticism. Wilder has described Crossan's approach as that of a "clash of worlds." Crossan himself thinks of the framework of the Parables as that of "advent-reversal-action." Jesus presents to his hearers a way of looking at life, not directly but indirectly, by way of metaphor. The freedom of the hearer is respected, but, at the same time, he is driven to reflection. Crossan may perhaps have overstated his case, but some very thought-provoking things are said here.

J.D. Crossan, *The Dark Interval: Towards a Theology of Story.* Sacramento: Argus Press, 1975.

A continuation of some of the work of the previous book, but at a deeper level, and also taking into account the structuralist approach to literature. Not an easy book to read, but well worth reading.

Semeia. Nos. 1,2,4. Scholars Press, University of Montana, Missoula, Montana.

This new periodical, which calls itself "an experimental journal for biblical criticism," has devoted its first two numbers to the parables, the second one being almost completely confined to The Parable of the Good Samaritan. No. 4 deals with Biblical Hermeneutics, as practiced by Paul Ricoeur. Most of the material was written by Ricoeur himself. Here is a seedbed, out of which many new things will grow.

These are not the only books to appear on the parables of Jesus in recent years. Others would want to add to or subtract from the list here given. A bibliography of recent work on the parables may be found in N. Perrin, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom,* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976.

J.C. Kirby
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ON PARABLES

Many complain that the words of the wise are always merely parables and of no use in daily life, which is the only life we have. When the sage says: "Go over," he does not mean that we should cross to some actual place, which we could do anyhow if the labor were worth it; he means some fabulous yonder, something unknown to us, something too that he cannot designate more precisely, and therefore cannot help us here in the very least. All these parables really set out to say merely that the incomprehensible is incomprehensible, and we know that already. But the cares we have to struggle with every day: that is a different matter.

Concerning this a man once said: Why such reluctance? If you only followed the parables you yourselves would become parables and with that rid of all your daily cares.

Another said: I bet that is also a parable.

The first said: You have won.

The second said: But unfortunately only in parable.

The first said: No, in reality: in parable you have lost.

Franz Kafka

PASSOVER - FOR CHRISTIANS AS WELL AS JEWS?

Passover is a joyous festival of liberation. For thousands of years the Jewish people have feasted in commemoration of their deliverance from slavery in Egypt in the thirteenth century B.C.E. It was in that event, known as the Exodus, that the ancient Israelites came to understand themselves as the people of God. Down through the centuries this annual celebration, lasting seven days, has been observed each spring. Like Easter for Christians, it is a movable feast set according to the Jewish lunar calendar. But the coincidence is not always exact. Passover starts on the fifteenth of the first Jewish month called Nisan. Since that was believed to be the Friday of Jesus' crucifixion, Christians have maintained the Good Friday tradition even when that does not fall on the fifteenth of Nisan because Easter (three days later) must always fall on a Sunday.

Recently Passover has been observed not only by devout Jews but also by Christians. In many churches on Maundy Thursday (the eve of Good Friday) a supper of lamb, wine, *mazzot*, *haroset* and other traditional foods of the Jewish *Seder* (the supper on the first night of Passover) was eaten by Christians. Their celebrations add the Christian Eucharist to the Passover, or reinterpret other parts of the *Seder* meal and its ritual from a Christian perspective.

THE VIEW OF HISTORY

To understand this development one needs to recall the long history of Passover back into Old Testament times. Originally there were two spring festivals, *hag ha-pesah*, a nomadic shepherd feast, and *hag ha-mazzot*, a Canaanite agricultural feast. The principal food of the former was lamb, while that of the latter was unleavened bread. Later these two combined and were associated with the Exodus.

In this early period Passover was strictly a family gathering in which the lambs were slaughtered in each home. The blood was sprinkled on the doorposts in memory of that night during their enslavement in Egypt when the angel of death "passed over" the families of the Israelites so that their first born were spared the plague of death. When worship was centralized in the temple, the lambs were slaughtered there and the blood sprinkled on the altar as a symbol of their redemption. So at the time of Jesus the Passover was a pilgrim festival with many thousands of pilgrims coming to Jerusalem to observe the feast. When the Jerusalem temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. this sacrificial aspect of the rite was eliminated.

During the intense persecution of the Jews by the Romans the Passover ritual included a new element. The *Haggadah*, the story of Israel's past from the patriarchs to the Exodus and beyond, gained a future dimension - the hope for a Messiah who would again deliver Israel from external suppression. Contemporary *Seders* still include this element as symbolized in Elijah's cup and the opening of a door.

CHRISTIAN REINTERPRETATION

According to the New Testament the Last Supper of Jesus with his disciples was at the time of Passover. In the first three Gospels this appears to have been the *Seder* meal. The fourth Gospel, however, places the Supper on the day before the Passover which would mean that Jesus was crucified at the time when the lambs were being slaughtered in the temple. This association of Jesus' death with Passover seems to have been deliberate with Jesus and was interpreted this way by the New Testament writers. The Apostle Paul specifically speaks of Jesus as "our Passover who was sacrificed for us" and John's Gospel specifically refers to Jesus as "The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world".

The unleavened bread which was broken was a sign of his broken body and the cup that was shared was a symbol of his blood poured out for his disciples and for all people. For the first Christians, then, Passover focused chiefly on the liberating work of Jesus whom they recognized as Messiah.

All of this now seems very obvious to Christians but to many Jews in the First Century (and since then) this is a radical reinterpretation of their understanding both of Passover and Messiahship. Their predominant motif had always been political liberation, freedom from the racial hatred and physical bondage of the nations around them.

The Kingdom of Jesus was so different from the one the Jews expected. His Messiahship was not the warrior-king-deliverer type, but a Suffering Servant who was crucified. There was no current Jewish tradition for that. The image of the Suffering Servant in the prophet Isaiah was in Jesus' self-understanding of his mission and was accepted by his disciples only after the resurrection. In addition, these followers of Jesus began to observe a kind of *Seder* meal every week, focused primarily on the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus as their Lord. When several decades later the bread and the wine were separated from the meal proper, the distance between the Jewish rites and those of Christians widened even further. The shift from political to spiritual deliverance and from an Exodus motif to crucifixion and resurrection was more than most Jews were able to accept.

A JEWISH LEGACY FOR CHRISTIANS

But, as Christians rediscover the Jewish Passover, they can be enriched in fresh ways. They will be reminded again of their common heritage in ancient Judaism. They can appropriate again the liberation of Israel from slavery as part of their own journey. With this there can be a renewed sense of history in its political and social dimensions. The chanting of the Hallel (Psalms 115-118) and the traditional music of the *Seder* demonstrate that solemnity and joy can be mixed in worship. In the symbolic foods and in the recitation of the *Haggadah* there is the colour and feeling of graphic teaching. And finally, with Passover being primarily a *family* celebration, Christians can discover once again that there is a primary role for the home as a central locus for any religious community.

JEWS AND CHRISTIANS CELEBRATE

Jews will always celebrate Passover as central to their religious life, a time of renewal for their faith out of the past and their hope for the future. Meanwhile Christians can be deeply enriched by this Jewish liturgy. They may break the *Afikomen* (a piece of *Mazzah* hidden throughout the meal and uncovered at the end) as the Bread of the Eucharist. They may consume Elijah's cup (a symbol of Jewish Messianic hope) as the Cup of the Eucharist. But the appropriation by Christians of the *Seder* as a whole will help to bind them and the Jewish people together in a way that was always intended.

Arthur Van Seters

"My grandfather was lame. Once they asked him to tell a story about his teacher. And he related how the holy Baal Shem used to hop and dance while he prayed. My grandfather rose as he spoke, and he was so swept away by his story that he himself began to hop and dance to show how the master had done. From that hour on he was cured of his lameness. That's the way to tell a story!"

M. Buber
Tales of the Hasidim

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