

A Simple Scheme of the Parables.

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IN the parables of our Lord we have the purity and simplicity of Christian doctrine at its fountain-head. Here we quaff of divine truth as of water welling cool and clear from the living rock. The spiritual refreshment here afforded is of the most invigorating and wholesome sort. Hence when we would teach our children the truth as it is in Jesus, it is to the parabolic teachings of the Master that we most naturally turn.

Dealt with separately, these telling stories from life and effective illustrations from nature give us every satisfaction. As soon, however, as we seek some expository help to make use of them as a whole, we leave the bracing pure air of the uplands for the fogs and mists of a dull uninspiring region. For the one thing that strikes us in reference to all classification of Christ's parables is the very obvious absence of that clearness and simplicity so characteristic of each parable in itself. The individual parable, because of this, has that which makes it memorable, and we have no fear that any one of them once learned can ever be forgotten or its point misapprehended. But who expects those for whom their lessons are most suitable to have their memories aided by a classification of the parables as so many allegories and moral lessons, or as a series of divine teachings, theoretic, evangelic, and judicial?¹

Confronted with this fact, must one abandon all hope of making the parabolic teaching as a whole a primer of Christian doctrine for the young? Surely with a quarry so promising for this purpose in its material, the object is one worthy of some effort, and may well encourage us to make the attempt.

A simple end is best pursued in a simple fashion, so we shall not tarry to discuss the question as to what are distinct parables and what merely similitudes or parable-germs. Accepting

¹ Principal Salmond, in his Bible Class Primer on the Parables, gives six classifications according to subject, besides that according to historical position, which he prefers, because as he says, 'it is extremely difficult if not impossible to find its fitting place for each parable, if the principle of arrangement is taken to be that of subject.' I am pleased to find that the parables Dr. Salmond names under the three historical divisions are the thirty dealt with in this article.

the parables, treated without apology as such, in the popular expositions of Trench, Bruce, and Dods, we find that what we may call the generally recognized parables amount to thirty in all. These are exclusive of teachings of this character, more or less developed in the Fourth Gospel. Of these thirty parables of the Synoptic evangelists, three, being those of the Sower, the Mustard Seed, and the Husbandmen or Tenants, are found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, while both Matthew and Luke record for us those of the Leaven and the Lost Sheep. The last of these, as all know, has its fittest setting in Luke's Gospel, while the other parables above referred to may no less suitably be regarded as pertaining to the Gospel of St. Matthew. This distribution gives us the half of our thirty parables in Luke's Gospel, while of the other fifteen all but one, that of the Growing Corn recorded by Mark alone, are found in Matthew's Gospel.

Turning now, in the first place, to the fifteen parables found in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, we note that of the seven recorded in the thirteenth chapter of the former Gospel, three, namely, those of the Sower, the Tares, and the Net relate to that most rudimentary matter in ethics, the distinction between good and evil. These parables tell us of good and bad soil, good and bad seed, and good and bad fish, conveying under these several figures most important lessons in regard to our human nature, its development, and destiny. Instructed thus as to the state of our hearts, the influences affecting our characters, and the ultimate worth or worthlessness to which these elements in the case must bring us, we have here a fit beginning for our parabolic lessons in religion. In these three pictures the fresh hopefulness of spring, the crowded life of summer, and the finality of harvest are all set before us. Can a more impressive panorama pass before the youthful mind? The need for submission to the hands of the great Husbandman, and for His help in order to deliverance from evil, as also that man's chief end is to seek God's approval and be fitted for His service are here most notably proclaimed.

To these three parables naturally succeed those of the Growing Corn, the Mustard Seed, and the

Leaven, all dealing with the subject of growth. The development of goodness and grace in the individual character, the growth of the Christian Church, and the dissemination and influence of the spirit of Christianity in the world are here severally brought under notice. Fit material is thus provided for a valuable series of elementary lessons on the experimental, historic, and prophetic aspects of the Christian faith. No less simple and instructive than the teachings of the soil, the seed, and the fish, are those here associated with corn, tree, and yeast.

The two remaining parables of Matthew's introductory series are those of the Hid Treasure and the Priceless Pearl. These, as also that of the Unmerciful Servant next related in this Gospel, treat of the receipt, cost, and conditions of the divine salvation. In this case the third parable may be regarded as a commentary on and explanation of the two preceding ones, at once revealing what the treasure is, and what its receipt entails, whether it be come across or earnestly sought after. For it is the discovery of God's grace that makes the children of the kingdom gracious, while in turn the gracious spirit is needed to attest and keep them His.

The next three parables in St. Matthew's Gospel are those of the Labourers, the Husbandmen, and the Two Sons. They very clearly deal with God's claims upon us as His servants, His tenants, and His children. How suitably they set forth man's bold indifference to his use and occupancy of his Maker's gifts, the selfish and grudging spirit of his service, and the boyish petulance or hypocritical pretence with which he responds to God's paternal claims upon him.

The last three parables of this Gospel are those of the Marriage Feast, the Ten Bridesmaids, and the Talents. These are most obviously parables of judgment, telling of doom, severally because of contempt of grace, neglect of vigilance, and failure in discharge of duty. There is a marked relationship between these and the three parables immediately preceding them. The parables of the Tenants and the Talents both relate to God's propriety in His creatures and man's neglect of this, while those of the Two Sons and Wedding Guests contrast genuine and insincere professions of obedience, as those of the Labourers and of the Bridesmaids do hearty devotion and dull selfish indifference.

In this rapid survey of the parables of the first two Gospels we have seen that they give us a series of five simple triads, treating in turn of good and evil, of growth, of the receipt and conditions of God's grace, of the divine claims, and the final judgment.

When now we turn to the fifteen parables of Luke's Gospel, we are struck with the fact that they are capable of an arrangement similar to that of those already dealt with, and presenting an interesting parallel to our scheme of the parables found in Matthew and Mark.

Luke's equivalent for Matthew's three parables on the great distinction is his three-one parable of the Lost and Found. Here the saving work of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is pictorially set before us. Matthew's standpoint is that of the Law, Luke's that of the Gospel, and so we find the 'good and bad' of the moralist translated into the 'lost and found' of the evangelist, the former giving us the human, the latter the divine view of this matter.

The equivalent in Luke's Gospel for the parables on growth of the two other Synoptists are his three on prayer, the means of growth. These are the parables of the Borrowing Friend at midnight, the Importunate Widow, and the Pharisee and Publican. Relating as they severally do to man's need of the divine provision, protection, and grace, they undoubtedly deal with the things most requisite in order to spiritual life and growth.

For Matthew's three parables on the requirements of the kingdom, we have in Luke three on graciousness as its essential feature. These are the parables of the Two Debtors, the Good Samaritan, and of Dives and Lazarus. The first illustrates the principle that in order to retain God's grace we must be gracious, while the others depict for us the excellence of the gracious, and the tragic fate of the ungracious soul.

Luke, like Matthew, gives us three parables dealing with the divine claims on man's recognition, loyalty, and service. These, the parables of the Barren Fig-Tree, the Farm Servants, and the Pounds, practically re-echo, with altered settings, the teachings of Matthew's parables of the Husbandmen, the Two Sons, and the Labourers in the Vineyard. We have here again the conceptions of man's obligations, as provided for by God, as a member of the divine household, and as God's servant, with their appropriate lessons.

The remaining parables of Luke's Gospel are those of the Rich Fool, the Sagacious Steward, and the Great Supper. These stand related to Matthew's three parables on judgment much in the same way in which the 'lost and found' of the former stands to the 'good and bad' of the latter evangelist. For here as there, while the tone of Matthew is severe, that of the beloved physician is distinctly gracious. Matthew's view of the future is that of rewards and punishments, while that of Luke is provision, or the lack of it, for the life to

come. The Sagacious Steward is commended for making provision, the Rich Fool condemned for his neglect of this; while in the parable of the Great Supper, the rich provision of the divine grace and man's strange indifference to it are vividly portrayed.

Here, then, is a simple arrangement of our Lord's parables, about as easy to remember as the parables themselves, and affording a clear survey of the most important doctrines of the Christian faith. Does it not commend itself?

Contributions and Comments.

The Bedstead (or rather 'Couch') of Og of Bashan (Deut. iii. 11).

In my *Grundriss der Geog. u. Gesch.*, etc., p. 318, I gave, following George Smith, the description of Marduk's temple at Babylon and its dimensions. According to him, the couch of Marduk was 9 cubits long and 4 wide. Not long ago Professor C. Levias, of Cincinnati, pointed out to me that the very same dimensions are attributed in Dt 3¹¹ to the bed of Og, king of Bashan. This, of course, cannot be accidental. The real state of matters will have been, as Professor Levias suggested ['Og therefore was a god'], that the bed in question stood in the temple of Milchom at Rabbath-Ammon, and came afterwards to be wrongly regarded as the couch or coffin of king Og. Such a transference could occur the more readily as among the W. Semites the king was the earthly representative of the chief god and (like Gudea) had also his tomb in the temple of his god beside the resting-place of the latter (*Grundriss*, p. 126 f.). The mythological significance of this ערש (Bab. *iršu* or *maialtu*) is at once nuptial bed and funeral couch (coffin), just as the 'makhtan of the king' among the S. Arabians (cf. *Grundriss*, p. 136) is also held, upon the ground of recent investigations of Ed. Glaser, to stand in some passages for a sort of tomb, probably the tomb of a king or prince.

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2 Thess. 2. iii.

THE article 'Man of Sin,' or 'Antichrist,' in the *D.B.* iii. 226, mentions as biblical designations of

that personage ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας, ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας, ὁ ἀντίχριστος, ὁ ἀντικείμενος, ὁ ἄνομος, and declares the Pauline account (2 Th 2³) to be this: That the final coming of Christ is to be preceded by (1) *the falling-away* (ἡ ἀποστασία). (2) *After this*, the revealing of the *Man of Sin*.

I do not think that the words of Paul justify this distinction. The word πρῶτον in the sentence, ἐὰν μὴ ἔλθῃ ἡ ἀποστασία πρῶτον, καὶ ἀποκαλυφθῇ ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας, etc., refers to the day of the Lord; first, there must come ἡ ἀποστασία, and the Man of Sin must be revealed; not the falling-away must come first, and (then) must be revealed. The point, which has been generally overlooked, is that ἡ ἀποστασία is nothing else but a translation of the Hebrew BELIAL. See Codex Alexandrinus in 3 K 21¹³; Aquila in Dt 15⁹, Jg 19²², 1 K 21² 10²⁷ 25¹⁷ 30²³, Pr 16²⁷, Nah 1¹¹. It is strange that no commentary (to my knowledge) has noticed this hitherto.

Again, ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας (which is the better reading, instead of ἀμαρτίας) is another translation of ערש אשׁמ; see LXX 2 K 22⁵ = Ps 17(18)⁴.

Finally, ὁ ἀντικείμενος is translation of *Satan*; see 3 K 11⁴, Codex B, ἦσαν σατὰν τῷ Ἰσραήλ = Cod. A, v.²⁵ ἐγένετο ἀντικείμενος τῷ Ἰσραήλ.

The nearest parallel to 2 Th 2³ is in the third book of the Sibylline oracles about the coming of Beliar (see James, *D.B.* iii. 227), and 2 Co 6¹⁵, τίς συμφώνησις Χριστῷ πρὸς Βελίαρ.

It is very curious that W. Lock (*D.B.* iv. 747), against the contention that the eschatology of 2 Thess. is un-Pauline, quotes this very passage, 2 Co 6¹⁵, without being aware, as it seems, of this