The Theological Significance of the Parable in Rabbinic Literature and the New Testament

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> *When he was alone, the Twelve and others who were around him questioned him about the parables. He replied, "To you the secret of the kingdom of God has been given; but to those who are outside, everything comes by way of parables, so that (as Scripture says) they may look and look, but see nothing; they may hear and hear, but understand nothing; otherwise they might turn to God and be forgiven." (Mk. 4:10-12; NEB)*

These lines have always been something of a *crux interpretum*. Yet the consensus of modern scholarship seems to be on the side of Frederick C. Grant, who, pointing out that "quite patently (Jesus') parables were a device to aid his hearers' understanding, not to prevent it," finds it necessary to describe Mark's theory as "perverse."[1]

Whatever may have been the original significance of Mark's words or their justification with regard to the parables as spoken by Jesus, there can be very little doubt that they are a fairly accurate description of what has happened to the parables in the long history of their interpretations—not only the traditional allegorical ones, with their built-in arbitrariness, but also much of the voluminous writing on the subject which has appeared since Jülicher administered the *coup de grace* to the allegorical understanding of the past.

When we see modern scholars going into contortions to perform a neat separation between similitudes and parables proper, between illustrations and allegories, invoking the canons of Greek rhetoric and even turning to Buddhist sources for prototypes, we can well imagine a modern Mark who might characterize all such efforts as "looking and looking, but seeing nothing."[2]

All of which is not to say that this type of work is altogether without value. Eta Linnemann is certainly right when, for example, she tells us that "the image in the *similitude* is taken from real life as everyone knows it," whereas "in the *parables proper*…we are told freely composed stories."[3] But the question remains whether that kind of analysis gets us any closer to an understanding of what the parables are all about. Joachim Jeremias seems more to the point when he dismisses the distinction drawn between metaphor, simile, parable, similitude, allegory, illustration and so forth "as a fruitless labour in the end, since the Hebrew *mashal* and the Aramaic *mathla* embraced all these categories and many more without distinction," and when he warns us that "to force the parables of Jesus into the categories of Greek rhetoric is to impose upon them an alien law."[4]

The warning of Jeremias is based upon an understanding of the particular environment within which Jesus functioned. It was the environment of Palestinian Judaism, in which the *mashal* type of teaching, inherited from the Hebrew Bible, was — as C. H. Dodd correctly observed—"a common and well-understood method of illustration, and the parables of Jesus are similar in form to Rabbinic parables."[5] Ignaz Ziegler was able to list some 937 parables dealing with comparisons based on "a king" or "the kingdom."[6] While most of those parables belong to the period after the fall of Bethar in 135 C.E., Israel Abrahams surmised that "some of the oldest parables in which heroes are *kings*, perhaps dealt in their original forms with ordinary *men*, and *kings* was probably substituted for *men* in some of them (both Rabbinic and Synoptic) by later redactors."[7] We by no means wish to imply that all of the Rabbinic parables invariably compared religious themes, such as the nature of God, to earthly kings. That was not the case. W. O. E. Oesterley notes, in addition to the royal parables, also those "which present a scene of a feast, and those which deal with some agricultural topic, such as a field or a vineyard."[8] There were many others as well.

But an important point to be made in this connection is that we would unnecessarily limit our field of vision were we to confine our observation to those Rabbinic statements which are either specifically labelled as a *mashal* or begin with one of the *mashal*'s typical introductory formulae. The *mashal* was but *one* of the methods of teaching one of the two aspects of Torah.

Torah, for the Pharisaic Jew, was God's revelation, and, as such, had to have a message for the present. To deduce the message for the present from the wording of the ancient text involved the process of *midrash*. That term "denotes both the occupation, the expounding and searching of Scripture, and its result, the exposition arrived at."[9] In later usage, the term *midrash* came to denote the non-legal utterances of the

Rabbis but in the earliest sources, those of the Tannaitic period, *midrash* was applied to both legal and non-legal interpretations of Scripture.[10]

Two other terms from the early Rabbinic period are somewhat more precise in distinguishing the legal from the non-legal teachings. *Halakhah* ("the way") is the term used for the legal rulings.[11] And *Haggadah* (or, in Aramaic, *Aggadah*) is the term for the non-legal teachings. The word *Haggadah* originated in the exegetical *terminus technicus*, *maggid hakathubh* ("the Scripture verse says, or implies"), but, already in very early times, the noun *Aggadah* came to be exclusively applied to non-legal interpretations.[12]

Moreover, "*Halakhah* and *Aggadah* do not exist solely and exclusively in connection with Holy Scripture. Among those who accept the oral tradition as a source of revelation…*Halakhah*, direction for the conduct of life, is also a quite independent entity, having existence apart from Scripture. In the same way, *Haggadah* can also exist independently, being no more than a religious tale of an edifying or apologetic tenor."[13]

We can go even further than this and assert that whatever theology the ancient Rabbis had was taught and understood by them as *Aggadah*. That is why the wider connotation of *Aggadah*, rather than only the narrower subdivision of *mashal*, is important to us in our present investigation. We shall continue to refer to *Aggadah* throughout the remainder of our presentation.

The theological significance of the *Aggadah* was stated in the *Siphre*, the Tannaitic *Midrash* to Deuteronomy, in the following terms:

> Is it your desire to know Him by Whose word the world came into existence? Then study *Haggadah*, for, by so doing, you get to know Him by Whose word the world came into existence, and you attach yourself to His ways.[14]

It is the merit of the German scholar, Paul Fiebig, that he, perhaps more than anyone else, has endeavoured to demonstrate in detail how the parables of Jesus have to be read in the light of the contemporary literature of *Aggadah*.[15] Yet it can hardly be conceded that Fiebig was sufficiently at home in the whole realm of Rabbinic literature to warrant the occasional generalizations in which he engages—such as when he asserts that the eschatological-messianic theme "completely recedes into the background in the direction taken by Rabbinic thinking," or that "for Jesus, the great religious themes and basic ideas move far more into the foreground than they do in the parables of the Rabbis."[16]

But then, alas, Fiebig is not alone among those aware of Jesus' Palestinian Jewish background who feel compelled to fault the teachings of the Rabbis in comparison with those of Jesus. Somehow, this whole area of scholarship is still awaiting its liberation from the fetters of polemics and apologetics.

Thus, Gustaf Dalman, another great Christian scholar of Rabbinics, emphasizes that:

> One and the same parable or proverb can be used for quite different purposes… He who pays attention to this will find that our Lord not only occasionally, but always deviates from the Rabbis, notwithstanding the similar application made of the same material in both cases.[17]

Again, Oesterley not only stresses that difference, but also introduces a value judgment:

> One cannot…fail to notice the immense difference both in subject-matter and treatment and, above all, in application, between the Gospel parables and those of the Rabbis; interesting and instructive as the latter often are, they stand on an altogether lower plane…We are convinced that any impartial reader of the two sets of parables, the Gospel and the Rabbinical, will be forced to admit that the latter compare very unfavourably with the former.[18]

Rudolf Bultmann, too, finds it necessary to point out that, while the New Testament parables do indeed correspond to the Rabbinic parables in a formal sense, both as a whole and in details, the Rabbinic parables are often forced and artificial, whereas the New Testament parables are the product of a greater originality in intuition.[19]

The list of authorities could be considerably extended. But enough has probably been quoted to illustrate the *tendenz*. It is, in a way, an understandable *tendenz*. It also has its theological significance. In the pre-modern period, when traditional Christian dogma was widely accepted, and when people believed

in the Virgin Birth, in the Incarnation, and in a literal Resurrection, we find no attempt to demonstrate the "originality" of Jesus' "contribution" to mankind's religious thought. Nor were artistic and aesthetic criteria invoked to prove the inferiority of Rabbinic teaching. It was a simple case of accepting Christianity as the truth, and of regarding that which was not Christian as either untrue or superseded.

But, with the decline of traditional belief in the supernatural, it became necessary—for those who wanted to be both Christian and modernist—to resort to more terrestrial criteria to prove that Jesus was superior to his Rabbinic contemporaries. Thus, with Harnack, one endeavoured to show that Jesus' ethical teachings were superior to those of the Pharisees and the Rabbis,[20] and, with Jülicher and Bultmann, one detected Jesus' greater skill and originality in parabolic teaching.

It is not our intention to question the spiritual contributions made by Jesus, or to deny his individual originality—any more than we would think of questioning and denying the contributions and the originality of a Hillel, a Rabbi Akiba, or a Rabbi Ishmael. But that is just the point. There would seem to be no real need, in evaluating a religious genius, to downgrade indiscriminately all of his contemporaries. It need not be a case of "either/or." It *could* be a matter of "both…and." At any rate, it is the latter attitude which we shall seek to pursue.

Something that Eta Linnemann stressed may serve as the point of departure for our undertaking:

> For the original listeners to the parables of Jesus we cannot presuppose the belief that he is the Christ.… Jesus stood before these listeners as a carpenter from Nazareth, as a wandering Rabbi. Like many at that time who wandered up and down the land with their disciples, as a preacher of repentance, of whom some supposed that he was a prophet. No acknowledged proof of divine authority gave weight to what he said, so that men had to listen to it in advance as a word of revelation. For even his miracles were no sort of authorization. Jesus was not the only wonder worker of his time…, and miracles were not an unequivocal proof for his contemporaries that the power of God was at work in the wonder worker.[21]

In the circumstances, it is perhaps easier for a believing Jew than for a believing Christian to approach the New Testament parables in the frame of mind of the original audiences to which they were addressed. And, when a modern Jew does so, he is quite liable to react in just the way in which Ignaz Ziegler did:

> Jesus was an Aggadist, as were, to a greater or lesser extent, all of his learned Pharisaic contemporaries. He did not have to learn the art of parable-making from anybody, for that art was being practised and cultivated in all of the alleys and in all of the synagogues.[22]

Yet all three Synoptic Gospels testify to the strong impression which Jesus made on his listeners: "For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."[23] The meaning of that verse is somewhat problematical. Joseph Klausner may be right when he sees the difference between the scribes and Jesus in the fact that the former made frequent references to the Scriptures in their parabolic teachings, while the latter did not, and that, while the Tannaim and their successors, the Amoraim, mainly practised Scripture exposition and only incidentally used parables, the reverse was the case with Jesus.[24] Also, it is not improbable that, in Jesus' parabolic teaching, there was more of the force of the speaker's own personality and the directness of his teaching than the audience was accustomed to hear from the average scribe, who tended to couch his message in the more conventional style of the schools.

But we cannot really be sure. And that, for two reasons. In the first place, Jesus may have been more of a Scripture exegete than the Gospels, in their present form, would allow him to have been. If Joachim Jeremias is right in arguing for the authenticity of the context, in Luke l0, in which the parable of the Good Samaritan is found,[25] we would have an instance where Jesus used a parable for midrashic Scripture exegesis. Perhaps some of Jesus' other parables, too, may originally have been part of his exposition of Bible passages—even though, for reasons of their own, the Evangelists may have seen fit to rearrange the material.

And that leads us to the second problem: the history of the transmission of ancient texts. If we read the parables of Jesus side by side with the parables preserved in the early Rabbinic texts, we shall have to agree with Israel Abrahams, who said: "Not only were the New Testament parables elaborated by the Evangelists far more than the Talmudic were by the Rabbis, but the former have been rendered with inimitable skill and felicity, while the latter have received no such accession of charm."[26]

To illustrate, let us take a parable of Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai (who died *circa* 80 C.E.), as preserved in the Tannaitic *Tosephta*. Yohanan was commenting on the fact that the first set of the tablets of the Law is described, in Exodus 32:16, as being "the work of God," whereas Moses had to furnish his own raw material for the second set.

> "To what is the matter like? To a human king who married a woman. He brought the scribe, and the ink, and the pen, and the document, and the witnesses. When she disgraced herself, she had to bring everything. It was sufficient for her that the king would give her his own recognizable signature."[27]

So far the *Tosephta*. In a much later Rabbinic work, the *Midrash Debharim Rabba*, which, in its present form, probably dates from the tenth century, we find the following version of the same parable:

> They asked Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai: "Why was the first set of tablets the work of God, and the second set the work of man?" He said to them: To what is this matter like? To a king who took a wife. He brought the scribe, and his own paper (*sc*. for the marriage contract), and his own (wedding) diadem. And he brought her into his house. The king (then) saw her sporting with one of his slaves. The king was angry with her, and he threw her out. Her agent (thereupon) came to him, and said to him: "My lord, do you not know whence you have taken her? Was it not from among the slaves? And, since she grew up among the slaves, her heart is still bold with them, and she is learning from them." The king said to him: "What do you want? That I become reconciled with her? You bring your own paper and scribe; and, behold, here is my signature!" Thus did Moses say to the Holy One, praised be He, when Israel did that deed (i.e., the making of the golden calf). He said to Him: "Do you not know whence you have taken them? Did you not bring them forth out of Egypt, a place of idolatry?" The Holy One, praised be He, said to him: "What do you want? That I become reconciled with them? (Then) bring your own tablets; and, behold, here is My signature!"[28]

Now, there can be very little doubt that the original first-century Rabbi Yohanan said considerably less than is here put into his mouth. But, by the same token, it stands to reason that he also must have said more than the bare sketch preserved in the *Tosephta*. Indeed, it is doubtful whether we could be able at all to interpret the laconic passage in the *Tosephta* were it not for the more elaborate versions contained in the later Rabbinic literature. As for Rabbi Yohanan's *ipsissima verba*, I am afraid that we may never know them.

David Halivni has pointed out that the transmission of materials by the masters of the Rabbinic tradition was not simply a mechanical process, but one in which the thoughts of the transmitters and their relation to the material became part of the transmitted material itself.[29]

Of course, a far shorter period of time elapsed between Jesus' utterance of the parables and their being edited by the Evangelists than was the case with Rabbi Yohanan's parable and later Rabbinic literature. Thus, in the case of the parables of Jesus, there was less time for the material to "grow." Nevertheless, far more skilled editorial work went into the making of the Gospels than into the editing of Rabbinic sources. As Jacob Neusner has aptly remarked, "to no individual in the history of Tannaitic and Amoraic Judaism was half so much attention ever devoted as was given to Jesus."[30]

This, incidentally, underlines the precariousness of the task, often too lightly undertaken, of comparing the parabolic utterances of the Jesus of the Gospels with those of the early Rabbis—on the basis of purely aesthetic criteria alone.

While there was less time for the parables of Jesus to "grow" than there was for the Rabbinic parables, accretions there nevertheless were. This is obvious from the variations occurring within the parallels of the Synoptic Gospels themselves. It is also taken for granted in modern New Testament scholarship—as when there is a recognition of the fact that parables, originally addressed by Jesus to those who disagreed with him, were recast by the early Church in such a way that they could be read as teachings which Jesus addressed to his own disciples.[31]

And thus we return to our original question: What *did* Jesus say in his parables? What *was* it that made his listeners think of Jesus as "one having authority"?

The answer, it must be said, depends upon the kind of Jesus that you have in mind; for, in determining what Jesus did or did not say, various scholars are guided by their overall impression of the

role which Jesus actually played. Occasionally, those scholarly views tend to cancel each other out. Rudolf Bultmann, for example, pictures a Jesus whose teachings were different both from the Judaism of his own time and from the Christianity of later generations. Consequently, Bultmann will accept as genuine parables of Jesus only those "where, on the one hand, expression is given to the contrast between Jewish morality and piety and the distinctive eschatological temper which characterized the preaching of Jesus; and where, on the other hand, we find no specifically Christian features."[32]

By way of contrast, Leo Baeck, while also ruling out of consideration any material which reflects the tendencies and purposes of the generations which came after the first generation of disciples, will accept as genuine words and deeds of Jesus only those which exemplify "the way of life and the social structure, the climate of thought and feeling, the way of speaking and the style of Jesus' own environment and time."[33]

Thus, while Bultmann and Baeck agree in ruling out of consideration any material which reflects the views of the later Church rather than those of Jesus, they disagree precisely on what it was that Jesus himself taught. For Bultmann, the yardstick is the *contrast* to contemporary Jewish piety; for Baeck, it is the *agreement*.

Further complications arise from the kind of simplistic and fallacious reasoning in which a number of scholars tend to indulge. Schematically, we can represent it as follows:

Jesus was crucified.

Jesus taught in parables.

Ergo : Jesus' parables led to his crucifixion.

This point of view is, of course, never put quite as simply, although some scholars come perilously close to doing so. Witness Charles W. F. Smith:

Jesus used parables and Jesus was put to death. The two facts are related and it is necessary to understand the connection…[34]

The parables were not simply vehicles of teaching. They were instruments forged for warfare and the means by which his strategy was vindicated—until no further words could serve, but only an act. The parables are the precipitate of a campaign, the final step of which was his surrender to the cross.[35]

Joachim Jeremias, too, thinks that the parables "were predominantly concerned with a situation of conflict," and he, too, calls them "weapons of warfare."[36] In the same vein, Dan Otto Via, Jr., states:

Jesus' behaviour, which challenged the Jewish world of fixed religious values, precipitated a conflict that resulted in his death. Inasmuch as his parables are interpretations of his behaviour, they are a part of the provocation of his conflict; hence he risked his life through his word.[37]

Needless to say, the underlying assumption of this view, however formulated, is that the message which Jesus preached was religiously so offensive to his Pharisaic contemporaries that, to silence him once and for all, he had to be put to death. But it is really nothing more than an *assumption*. Suppose, for example, that one began with a different assumption—with the assumption that Jesus' crucifixion by the Romans was a *political* execution which had nothing whatsoever to do with the religious message of his parables. And that is not even an *assumption*. It is a fact; for, as S. G. F. Brandon has demonstrated very clearly:

Ironic though it be, the most certain thing known about Jesus of Nazareth is that he was crucified by the Romans as a rebel against their government in Judaea.[38]

Or suppose that one accepts the conclusion of Haim H. Cohn, the Israeli Supreme Court Justice, who argues that, so far from being responsible for Jesus' death, the *Sanhedrin* actually tried—unsuccessfully, as it turned out—to save Jesus from the hands of the Roman authorities.[39] What would happen to that whole syllogistic structure which leads from the crucifixion to the contents of the parables? It would certainly be unable to withstand the onslaught; and a new interpretation of the parables would have to come into being.

Yet even without such an onslaught, carried out with the weapons of more recent scholarship, the syllogistic structure—apart from its logical fallacy—is doomed to fall on account of its inherent weakness. For it was built on an inadequate knowledge of the very nature of Pharisaic-Rabbinic Judaism.

Did Jesus come into conflict with assorted scribes and Pharisees? No doubt, he did! But so did the Pharisees among themselves—all of the time. Pharisaic-Rabbinic Judaism is an argumentative kind of religion. There is hardly a single item of either *Halakhah* or *Aggadah* in the entire range of Rabbinic literature which is not contested by one Rabbi or another. That kind of conflict is the very life-blood of Rabbinic Judaism. What is more, even in those cases where a decision was reached by majority vote, the dissenting opinion continued to be transmitted as part of the tradition. The Talmud is a record of discussions, not a law code. That was the situation in matters of *Halakhah*. When it came to *Aggadah*, to matters theological, with one or two rare exceptions, no vote was ever taken; and different—often contradictory—views were taught side by side. They had to be, for the *Aggadah* was dialectical. As Emil L. Fackenheim describes it:

> Divine power transcends all things human—yet divine Love becomes involved with things human, and man, made a partner of God, can "as it were" augment or diminish divine power. Israel's election is a divinely imposed fate—and a free human choice. Man must wait for redemption as though all depended on God—and work for it as though all depended on man. The Messiah will come when all men are just—or all wicked. These affirmations must be held together unless thought is to lose either divine infinity or finite humanity, or the relation between them. Yet they cannot be held together except in stories, parables, and metaphors.[40]

Pharisaic-Rabbinic Judaism was anything but a rigid and monolithic structure. The fact that Rabbi X came into conflict with Rabbi Y certainly did not mean that henceforth Rabbi Y would be after Rabbi X's blood. They might even submit to a Heavenly Voice proclaiming: "Both of them are the words of the Living God!" as did the constantly feuding schools of Hillel and Shammai.[41]

It is, therefore, with utter amazement that someone schooled in the Rabbinic tradition comes across Eta Linnemann's final comment on the parable of The Labourers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16). After explaining that Jesus was teaching about the unconditional goodness of God, and was thereby attacking the merit system of Pharisaic Judaism, she concludes by saying:

But those who remain closed to his word must raise the demand: "Crucify him, this man blasphemes God."[42]

Must they really? It is true enough that many Pharisees and Rabbis did subscribe to Ben He He's maxim, "According to the labour is the reward."[43] It is furthermore true that the alleged Rabbinic parallel to the parable of The Labourers in the Vineyard differs in one crucial respect from the parable told by Jesus. In the latter, the labourers hired in the eleventh hour receive a full day's wages even though they have only worked for one hour. In the former, the man who received a full day's wages for two hours' work is said to have actually *earned* them, because, during those two hours, he accomplished more than the rest of the labourers had done all day long.[44]

But it is likewise true that Arthur Marmorstein was able to write a whole book of 199 pages about the Rabbinic doctrine of merits,[45] a book in which he traces the changing fate of that particular doctrine. It was a doctrine more firmly held in some generations than in others; one, moreover, which never lacked its opponents among the ranks of the Rabbis. Yet we never find that those who challenged the doctrine were threatened by their opponents with crucifixion.

Nor, to the best of our knowledge, was that threat uttered against Rabbi Yudan bar Hanan, when he taught in the name of R. Berekhiah:

The Holy One, praised be He, said to Israel: "My children, if you see that the merit of the patriarchs is giving way, and that the merit of the matriarchs is declining, go and cleave unto steadfast love (*hesed*); as it is said [Isa. 54:10], 'For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed.' 'The mountains may depart'—that refers to the merit of the patriarchs; 'and the hills be removed'—that refers to the merit of the matriarchs. From now on it is a case of 'but My steadfast love shall not depart from you, and My covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord Who has compassion on you.'"[46]

For that matter, there is no record of the crucifixion of the Rabbi who taught the following *Aggadah*:

"And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious." [Exod. 33:19].

At that time the Holy One, praised be He, showed him (Moses) all the treasuries of the reward prepared for the righteous.

He (Moses) said to Him: "Sovereign of the Universe, to whom does this treasury belong?"

He (God) said to him: "It belongs to those who act righteously."

"And whose is that?"

"It belongs to those who support orphans."

And similarly in the case of every single treasury—until he saw a particularly large treasury.

He [Moses] said to Him: "Whose is this?"

He [God] said to him: "To him who has (*sc*. merit), I give of his own. But to him who has none, I give (*sc*. out of this treasury) for nothing (*hinnam* = lit. *gratis*, derived from *hen* = grace); as it is said: 'And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.'"[47]

A sermon like that, addressed to a congregation reared in the more conventional doctrine of "According to the labour is the reward," would attract attention and stimulate thought. Indeed, it might even cause some astonishment at the preacher and marvel at his self-assured "authority." But the question of "blasphemy" would not occur to anyone. Why, then, should we assume that Jesus' audience reacted any differently to the parable of The Labourers in the Vineyard?

Still, once one has made up one's mind that everything Jesus taught in his parables must have been offensive to his Pharisaic contemporaries, one tries to find "offence" everywhere.

A case in point is Linnemann's treatment of the parable of The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). The fact that the father showed greater affection for, or made more fuss over, the returning prodigal than in respect of the conventionally obedient elder brother means—to her—that Jesus turned "the world upside down," and she is careful to underline the fact that a man who would thus turn the world upside down must also be ready "to suffer it that people will 'put him out of the world' for the sake of the order of the world."[48]

It would take us too far afield to cite all the numerous passages from the *Aggadah* which deal with the doctrine of repentance, and which seem to suggest that anyone who did *not* accept the message of the parable of The Prodigal Son would not have been within the mainstream of Pharisaic-Rabbinic Judaism. Suffice it to draw attention to a significant literary curiosity.

The Talmud contains the following statement:

Rabbi Abbahu said: The place occupied by repentant sinners cannot be attained even by the completely righteous; as it is said (Isa. 57:19): "Peace, peace, to him that is far off, and to him that is near." What is the meaning of "far off"? It means someone *originally* far off (i.e., the sinner who is far from God). And what is the meaning of "near"? It means one who was *originally* (and still is) near (to God).[49]

This passage is quoted by an eighth-century scholar, Rabbi Aha Gaon—with one significant change. After the statement that the repentant sinners are superior to the completely righteous, Rabbi Aha inserts the following words:

What are repentant sinners like? (The matter can be compared) to a king who had two sons; one walked in the way of goodness, and one became depraved.[50]

Louis Ginzberg, who edited this manuscript, surmises that Rabbi Aha must have had those words in his text of the Talmud, even though later editions of the Talmud no longer contain them. Ginzberg also asserts that they are "the short, original form of the New Testament parable of the prodigal son."[51]

Israel Abrahams, commenting on this text, finds that Rabbi Aha's reading of the talmudic passage "looks like a reminiscence of Luke's Parable," and goes on to say that "it may have been removed from the Talmud text by scribes more cognizant than Abbahu was of the source of the story."[52]

We are not interested at the moment in the question of priorities, i.e., did the *Aggadah* borrow it from Jesus, or did Jesus utilize aggadic material? Nor are we concerned with the question of who removed the words from the text of the Talmud. It is a rather unlikely hypothesis to think of scribes "more cognizant than Abbahu was of the source of the story." For Rabbi Abbahu, who knew Greek, was famous as a controversialist with Christians.[53]

What is of great importance to us, however, is the simple fact that the parable of The Prodigal Son fitted in so easily and naturally with the Rabbinic scheme of things that it could be used by the Rabbis themselves to illustrate a Rabbinic statement on the subject of repentant sinners. That would hardly have been the case had that parable been meant to "turn the world upside down"—if, by "world," we mean the world of Pharisaic-Rabbinic Judaism!

As a final illustration, we may be permitted to refer to The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). In the attempt to play Jesus off against his Jewish contemporaries, this parable plays a very significant role. Robert W. Funk summarizes it as follows:

The scribes and Pharisees sought to relate (the law) to everyday existence in countless ways, but it grew less relevant with each step… Jesus attempted nothing less than to shatter the whole tradition that had obscured the law.[54]

While we do not subscribe to Funk's evaluation of the Rabbinic interpretation of the law, we shall grant him his point for argument's sake, and confine ourselves to an examination of how, if at all, Jesus' telling of the parable of The Good Samaritan was an attempt "to shatter the whole tradition that had obscured the law."

To begin with, we hold, with Jeremias,[55] that there is no reason to detach the parable from its present context.[56] The difficulty, noted by a number of scholars, that the lawyer asks, "Whom must I *treat* as a neighbour?" while Jesus' parable answers the question, "Who *acted* as a neighbour?" is only an apparent difficulty. As Jeremias points out, neither Jesus nor the lawyer is seeking a definition of "neighbour," but, rather, the *extent* of the conception of "neighbour." "The only difference between them is that the scribe is looking at the matter from a theoretical point of view, while Jesus illuminates the question with a practical example."[57]

It is obvious that Jesus is intent upon giving the conception of "neighbour" its widest possible extent, and upon broadening the lawyer's horizon. Therefore, the man in the parable, who exemplifies the love of neighbour, is not a representative of the clergy, a priest or a Levite. He is not even a fellow Jew, but a Samaritan. And the fact that a Samaritan is given the role of the merciful neighbour was, according to Linnemann, "surprising and offensive to Jesus' hearers."[58] According to Robert W. Funk, Jesus' question at the end, "Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbour?" is "a question on which the Jew chokes."[59]

That Jesus meant to "surprise" with this parable is quite likely. It is certainly surprising to be told that your own religious teachings are better put into practice by an outsider than by your own religious leadership. The Rabbis, too, occasionally liked to hold up the behaviour of non-Jews as examples to be followed by Jews.

Rabbi Akiba said: For three things I love the Medes. When they cut meat, they cut it only on the table; when they kiss, they only kiss the hand; and when they hold counsel, they do so only in the field…

Rabban Gamaliel said: For three things I love the Persians. They are modest in their eating habits, modest in the bathroom, and modest in their sexual relations.[60]

But the Rabbis' use of this teaching device went beyond an admiration of the non-Jews' good manners and etiquette. They did not shrink from using it in expounding one of the Ten Commandments! In a question, strikingly similar to the lawyer's question in Luke 10, the disciples asked Rabbi Eliezer: "How far does the honour due father and mother extend?" And the Rabbi answered:

Go forth and see what a certain heathen, Dama ben Nethina, did in Ashkelon!

We are then informed that Dama ben Nethina was head of the city council in Ashkelon. He once refused to disturb his father's sleep, when, by doing so, he could have made a great profit. He would never sit down on the stone on which his father sat; and, after his father's death, Dama turned this stone into an object of worship. (A curious point for a Rabbi to single out by way of praise!) And he treated his mother with the utmost deference even when, on one occasion, she insulted him in the presence of the entire city council.[61]

Judging by the record, in both the Palestinian and the Babylonian Talmud, no offence was taken at this illustration. Now, if invoking the heathen of Ashkelon in an exposition of Exodus 20:12 caused no offence in the case of Rabbi Eliezer, it is difficult to see why invoking the Samaritan in an exposition of Leviticus 19:18 should have been so particularly offensive in the case of Jesus.

Admittedly, the relations between Jews and Samaritans were not particularly friendly. But why should the Samaritan not be thought capable of acting the good neighbour? After all, within a strictly legalistic context, Rabbi Simeon ben Gamaliel once stated:

Whatever commandment the Samaritans have adopted, they are very strict in the observance thereof—stricter than the Jews.[62]

At the time of Jesus, the *Halakhah* treated the Samaritans in some respects as Jews, and in other respects as Gentiles. It was not until the third century C.E., long after the time of Jesus, that the decision was reached not to regard the Samaritans as Jews.[63]

We are, therefore, no more able to see the "offence" in the parable of The Good Samaritan than we have been able to see it in The Labourers in the Vineyard or in The Prodigal Son. What we *are* able to see is a Jesus who impresses by his directness of approach, his skill in the use of the parable, and his ability to

draw his listeners into the *problematik* of his presentation. But he does all that within the ambience of the Pharisaic-Rabbinic world of thought and within the broad limits of the realm of *Aggadah*. The fact that Jesus and the Rabbis spoke the same language and shared the same world of thought must not, however, be taken to imply that a Jesus, or a Hillel, or a Rabbi Akiba did not each have his own very specific emphases. Nor does it mean that either Jesus or the Rabbis were primarily concerned with religious commonplaces or moral generalities. The very concreteness of their language made that impossible. But it is also the very concreteness of their language—the use of parables instead of dogmatic formulations, of folklore motifs in place of theological constructs—which prevents the philosophical dissipation of their central affirmations. Therein lies the abiding theological significance of the parables of Jesus and the *Aggadah* of the Rabbis—and perhaps not least for an age like ours, when the religious heritage of Jerusalem and the philosophical heritage of Athens almost seem to have reached the end of their common journey through the history of human thought.

*** Reprinted from *Christian News from Israel* 23.2 (10) (1972): 76-86. Used with permission. *Christian News from Israel* was a publication of the Government of Israel's Ministry of Religious Affairs. Many outstanding articles were published in this journal during the approximately thirty years of its existence, beginning in 1950. However, unfortunately, it is next to impossible to find copies of this now-defunct journal—even large libraries seldom possess it. Jerusalem Perspective reprints this article with the permission of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, thus resurrecting Petuchowski's fine work. At the time the article was written, Petuchowski was Professor of Rabbinics and Jewish Theology at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, Ohio, and a visiting Professor in the Department of Jewish Philosophy at Tel Aviv University. We have preserved the spelling of the original *Christian New from Israel* article, which was according to British usage. Flusser and Lindsey's responses appeared in the following issue: *Christian News from Israel* 23.3 (11) (1973): 147-50.**

[1] In *The Interpreter's Bible* (ed. George Arthur Buttrick, *et al.*; Vol. VII; New York and Nashville, 1951), 699ff. But cf. T. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus* (2nd ed.; Cambridge, 1935), 57-81.

[2] See Adolf Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu* (offset of 1910 edition; Darmstadt, 1969), 1:25-118, for a survey of this kind of interpretation including Jülicher's own. For a more recent attempt to classify the various types of parable, see Eta Linnemann, *Jesus of the Parables* (New York and Evanston, 1966), 3ff.

[3] Linnemann, *Jesus of the Parables*, 3ff.

[4] Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (New York, 1953), 20. See also Robert W. Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God* (New York, Evanston and London, 1966), 126.

[5] C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (revised ed.; London, 1936), 15.

[6] Ignaz Ziegler, *Die Königsgleichnisse des Midrasch be leuchtet durch die römische Kaiserzeit* (Breslau, 1903), *passim*.

[7] Israel Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels* (2 vols.; Cambridge, 1917-1924), 1:99.

[8] W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Gospel Parables in the Light of their Jewish Background* (London, 1936), 10ff.

[9] J. W. Doeve, *Jewish Hermeneutics in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts* (Assen, 1954), 54ff.

[10] Cf. W. Bacher, *Die exegetische Terminologie der jüdischen Traditionsliteratur* (Leipzig, 1905), 1:25-7, 103-5.

[11] See Bacher, *Die exegetische Terminologie*, 1:42ff.

[12] See Bacher, *Die exegetische Terminologie*, 1:30-37.

[13] Doeve, *Jewish Hermeneutics*, 56ff.

[14] *Siphre*, *Eqebh*, paragraph 49, ed. Finkelstein (Berlin, 1939), 115. The statement there is attributed to the *doreshe haggadoth*. A variant reading has *doreshe reshumoth*, probably a group of allegorists. See Jacob Z. Lauterbach, "The Ancient Jewish Allegorists in Talmud and Midrash," *Jewish Quarterly Review* (New Series, Vol. 1 [1910/11]): 291-333, 503-31, and Isaak Heinemann, *Altjüdische Allegoristik* (Breslau, 1936), 66ff.

[15] See Paul Fiebig, *Altjüdische Gleichnisse und die Gleichnisse Jesu* (Tübingen and Leipzig, 1904): *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu im Lichte der Rabbinischen Gleichnisse des neutestamentlichen Zeitalters* (Tübingen, 1912); and *Der Erzählungsstil der Evangelien* (Leipzig, 1925).

[16] Fiebig, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 128ff.

[17] Gustaf Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua* (London, 1929), 223.

[18] Oesterley, *The Gospel Parables*, 10ff.

[19] In *R.G.G.* (2nd ed.), 1241, as quoted by Theodor Guttmann, *Hamashal Bithequphath Hatannaim* (2nd ed.; Jerusalem, 1949), 71. Guttmann attempts to rebut Bultmann's charge by saying that Bultmann's distinction might possibly be correct in the case of *some* of the post-Tannaitic parables, but that it does not hold in the case of the Tannaitic parables, i.e., those of the period closest to the New Testament.

[20] Cf. Adolf Harnack, *What Is Christianity?* (New York, 1957), *passim*.

[21] Linnemann, *Jesus of the Parables*, 35.

[22] Ignaz Ziegler, *Die Königsgleichnisse des Midrasch*, xxii. Jülicher, too, was aware of the aggadic nature of Jesus' discourse, but he could not get himself to admit that Jesus shared that much with the Rabbis. That is why Jülicher makes a pathetic attempt to divorce the aggadic realm from the purview of Rabbinic concern. "The Rabbi, as such, has one method of teaching only—the *Halachah*. The scribe is already bound by his very name to forgo originality. He is to be but a channel for the wisdom streaming forth from every word of the Scriptures. The *Haggadah*, that independent melting down of Scriptural bullion in the fire of imagination and soul, it is not the product of the Rabbinic, but of the Hebraic spirit… It is the voice of the people which can be heard in such pictures. The *Haggadah* together with its flowers, the parables, grew up in the home—to be sure, in the Hebrew home with its intimate, happy and pure family life. The Rabbi and his *Halakhah* is (sic) an outgrowth of the school. That is why the Jewish Rabbi, as a Rabbi, had to despise the haggadic element. But, as a human being, as a son of his people, he was nevertheless unable ever to get away from it altogether. Jesus did not want to get away from it. God had saved him from the school" (Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:172ff.). It did not seem to have dawned on Jülicher that such *Haggadah* as is available to us has come down to us for no other reason than that the Rabbis, in their schools(!), have preserved it. He seems also completely unaware of the fact that, in Rabbinic Judaism, it was usually one and the same person (e.g., Hillel, R. Yohanan ben Zakkai) who was both a master of the *Halakhah* and a master of the *Aggadah*. There is, of course, no denying that the *Aggadah* represented the more popular element in Rabbinic teaching. But, in reading the literature, one hardly gets the impression that the Rabbis, as Rabbis, had to "despise" that element, or that they yielded to it only

with the utmost reluctance. On the contrary, as Max Kadushin points out (*The Rabbinic Mind* [2nd ed.; New York, Toronto, London, 1965], 87): "Characteristic of the Rabbis' relation to the folk, of the identity of their interests with those of the folk, is the Rabbis' own attitude toward *Haggadah*. They did not view it as something fit only for the masses, but to which they themselves were superior; on the contrary, they felt themselves deeply in need of *Haggadah*, regarding it as one of the great divisions of Torah, and the study of which was incumbent upon them.... Younger scholars were stimulated toward becoming skillful in *Haggadah* as well as in *Halakhah*." And see Isaak Heinemann, *Darkhe Ha-Aggadah* (2nd ed.; Jerusalem, 5714), 16. Yet there are indeed a few isolated passages in Rabbinic literature which disparage the *Aggadah*. Leo Baeck has examined those passages in great detail, finding it possible to relate them to very specific circumstances, viz., the usage of aggadic hermeneutics by Christians of the second century, in the allegorical and christological interpretation of the Hebrew Bible (Leo Baeck, *Aus drei Jahrtausenden* [2nd ed.; Tübingen, 1958], 176-85.)

[23] Mark 1:22; Matthew 7:29; Luke 4:32.

[24] Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York, 1946), 264ff.

[25] Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 205.

[26] Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels*, 1:96. See also A. Marmorstein's observation that the sermons, contained in the *Aggadah*, are so brief and laconic that it is not always possible for us to reconstruct the entire sermon on the basis of the mere sketch which has been preserved (Arthur Marmorstein, *Talmud und Neues Testament* [Vinkovci, 1908], 47.)

[27] *Tosephta Baba Kamma* 7:4, ed. Zuckermandel, 357ff.

[28] *Midrash Debharim Rabba*, *Eqebh*, section 17, ed. Lieberman (Jerusalem, 1964), 91. The parallels in *Tanhuma*, *Ki Tissa*, chapter 30, and *Yalqut Shime'oni*, *Ki Tissa*, section 397, introduce yet a further motif, viz., the bride's agent destroys the original marriage contract.

[29] David Halivni, *Sources and Traditions* (Tel Aviv, 1968), 15 (Hebrew).

[30] Jacob Neusner, *Development of a Legend* (Leiden, 1970), 2.

[31] Linnemann, *Jesus of the Parables*, 42ff.

[32] Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (New York and Evanston, 1963), 205.

[33] Leo Baeck, *Judaism and Christianity* (Philadelphia 1958), 99ff.

[34] Charles W. F. Smith, *The Jesus of the Parables* (Philadelphia, 1948), 17.

[35] Smith, *The Jesus of the Parables*, 272ff.

[36] Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 21.

[37] Dan Otto Via, Jr., *The Parables* (Philadelphia, 1967), 192.

[38] S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots* (New York, 1967), 1 and *passim*. And see his, "The Trial of Jesus," in *Judaism* 20:1 (Winter 1971): 43-8.

[39] Haim H. Cohn, *The Trial and Death of Jesus* (Tel Aviv, 1968), *passim* (Hebrew).

[40] Emil L. Fackenheim, *Quest for Past and Future* (Bloomington and London, 1968), 16ff.

[41] *B. Erubhin* 13b; *b. Gittin* 6b.

[42] Linnemann, *Jesus of the Parables*, 88.

[43] *Mishnah Abhoth* 5:23.

[44] *J. Berakhoth* II, 8, Krotoshin ed., 5c; *Canticles Rabba* 6:2.

[45] Arthur Marmorstein, *The Doctrine of Merits in Old Rabbinical Literature* (London, 1920).

[46] *J. Sanhedrin* X, 1, Krotoshin ed., 27d.

[47] *Midrash Tanhuma*, *Ki Tissa*, section 16, ed. Buber, 58b. Parallels which name different "good deeds" are found in *Midrash Tanhuma*, *Ki Tissa*, section 28, and *Exodus Rabba* 45:6.

[48] Linnemann, *Jesus of the Parables*, 80ff.

[49] *B. Sanhedrin* 99a.

[50] Louis Ginzberg, *Geonica* (2nd ed.; New York, 1968), 2:376–7.

[51] Ginzberg, *Geonica*, 2:351.

[52] Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels*, 1:92.

[53] S. Mendelson, "Abbahu," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1:36-7.

[54] Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God*, 221ff.

[55] Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 205.

[56] Cf. also Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God*, 208ff. Funk summarizes the position of Birger Gerhardsson: "Since the rabbis were fond of the parable in the exposition of scripture, it is not surprising that the lawyer's question, which had to do with an *exegetical* point (what is the meaning of *re'akha* in the text?), evokes a parable as a midrash on the text."

[57] Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 205.

[58] Linnemann, *Jesus of the Parables*, 53.

[59] Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God*, 212ff.

[60] *B. Berakhoth* 8b.

[61] *B. Kiddushin* 31a; *j. Pe'ah* I, 1, Krotoshin ed., 15c; and cf. Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels*, 2:36ff.

[62] *B. Hullin* 4a.

[63] See Maurice Simon, "Introduction" to Tractate *Kuthim*, in A. Cohen, ed., *The Minor Tractates of the Talmud*, Vol. II (London, 1965).

David Flusser's Response

Petuchowski's article is an important step in the progress of scholarship. Even the best recent books dealing with the parables have neglected the fact that Jesus' parables are not as unique as they seem to be. They are part and parcel of rabbinic tradition. This simple truth has been forgotten because a German scholar, Jülicher, decided that there is practically no connection between Jesus' and the rabbinic parables; Jülicher even thought that the other Jews were influenced by him.

Until now, dissident scholars have tried to find concrete sources for Jesus' parables: they pick out this or that rabbinic parable to show that Jesus had known it and had transformed it in his own way. But the

correct approach would be to use the method of the Russian formalists and study the form of the Jewish parable itself, its motifs and literary functions. Most motifs are common to the parables of the rabbis and of Jesus. Two themes are dominant: workers (or slaves), their labour and compensation, and the banquet and the invited guests, but even the image of the net appears in a parable of Jesus and a saying of Rabbi Akiba. A master of this kind of oral literature can, with the help of these motifs, describe an interesting, often paradoxical, situation, which, at the same time, evokes a realistic impression. Occasionally, the situation is so striking that others like to use the new creation, but even so, strictly speaking, they do not repeat a specific parable, but rather change its components, combining them with other popular themes. This happened, for instance, in Jesus' famous parable of the Sower. The archetype, so to say, appears in *Mishna Avoth* (Ethics of the Fathers) 5:15: "There are four types of students: Quick to learn and quick to forget…slow to learn and slow to forget…quick to learn and slow to forget and slow to learn and quick to forget…" Jesus worked out this scheme in an "impressionistic" way and applied it to four kinds of soil. That types of disciples, or spiritual rabbis, were compared with various objects is also known from rabbinic literature, take again *Mishna Avoth* 5:18. Let me cite an example of a rabbinic parable: "This world resembles a householder who hired workers and inspected them to see who really worked…both for those who really worked and for those who did not really work, all was prepared for a banquet" (*Seder Eliahu Rabba*, ed. Isch Schalom, p. 5). Here, the theme of workers and their work and the banquet motif are dovetailed. Even the paradox of this parable resembles the way of Jesus: both the good and the bad workers are invited to the banquet. The parable is used in an eschatological sense, for the banquet motif is very apt for that purpose: the Gentiles will not partake of the banquet but be condemned to Gehenna, because they speak against the Children of Israel. But the simile itself could also be used for many other purposes and here it is not very well adapted to its aim.

A good parabolist, evidently, had not only to produce tension within the simile itself, but also to forge a dialectical link between the simile and its application. When one does not clarify one's parable, the simile only offers hints of the object of the teaching, and even then not unequivocally. A parable may explain the meaning of human life, the eschatological expectation, the proper and false behaviour of Man towards God, the study of Torah, Israel's election. It may even be used, as in later rabbinic literature, to elucidate biblical narratives or individual verses.

The parable itself, then, unilluminated, is really difficult to understand, and there may often be more than one possible meaning. Jesus was right to stress the point that a parable is harder of comprehension than a plain teaching. The study of his parables in connection with rabbinic ones will surely throw light on the development of this *genre* in rabbinic literature and its typology.

Robert L. Lindsey's Response

Dr. Petuchowski has very correctly assessed the liberal-Christian point of view of many scholars as one leading to serious distortion of the insistent Jewishness of the New Testament. He is unquestionably right in attacking the shallowness with which many Christians approach and reproach the Pharisaic-rabbinic tradition.

It is of the greatest importance that the approach to the New Testament include a careful and critical understanding of the characteristics of each of the Gospels and their inter-relationship. Although the priority of the Gospel of Mark has long been taken for granted, the consensus of much of the scholarship today is that we cannot view this "assured result of criticism" as self-evident. It is certain that the Gospels of Matthew and Luke preserve materials more historically authentic and deriving from earlier sources than the text we have of Mark. This means not only that Mark is full of readings which are secondary but that we often have, at least in Luke, a far less redacted story.

Luke's story does not implicate the Pharisees in the arrest of Jesus. The blame is placed on the "high priests," namely, the ruling Sadducean family which largely controlled the affairs of the Temple and of whom the Essenes complained so bitterly. Luke even has a report that some of the Pharisees warned Jesus against Herod Antipas and, in his book of *Acts of the Apostles*, he makes it clear that many of the first Jewish Christians were Pharisees in background. It is surely significant that he never suggests that the Sadducees joined the Jesus movement.

Thus, the tendency to chastise the "scribes and Pharisees"—a phrase very frequent in Mark and even more so in Matthew—is almost surely due to Mark's editorial policy to stereotype and dramatize; in this instance, as even Rudolf Bultmann noted, Mark and Matthew show the ever-growing trend of "the

tradition" to involve the Pharisees in the fate of Jesus. Since there are other and serious reasons for accepting Luke's story as the earliest and, in general, the most exact, we have a further illustration of his preservation of good texts—here, of a picture of the Pharisees which seems to accord with the best that we can learn of the Jewish movements of the first century.

As for the propensity of Christian scholars to see in Jesus' use of parables a teaching method which led more or less automatically to opposition from the organized movements of the period, one is reminded how Jesus himself argued against those who accused him of casting out demons with the help of the Prince of demons. "If I cast out demons by the aid of the Prince of the demons," said he, "by whose aid do your sons cast out demons?" If Jesus automatically aroused violent antagonism by using the parabolic method, would not the rabbis have provoked it by their own use of simile and allegory? We must look for other causes than this happy aggadism for the fateful conflict over Jesus.

There is a strong possibility that the famous passage in Mark (4:10-12) about Jesus' purpose in using parables is more original than it seems. Many have supposed that Mark is suggesting that Jesus deliberately used parables to hide his message. Scholars claim that Jesus could have said nothing of the kind, for, obviously, the whole purpose of the stories that he tells is to make a point; the conjecture is that Mark changed Jesus' words for his own "theological" reasons.

The puzzle of the passage, which Petuchowski labels a *crux interpretum* for modern scholars, is the use of the strong Greek word translated "so that." Luke's parallel, which—I argue—is earlier, and closer to the original Hebrew undertext, quotes Jesus as saying to his disciples: "To you it is given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of God. To the rest (the message comes) in parables so that seeing they shall not see and hearing they shall not understand" (Luke 8:10). When we translate this passage word for word into Hebrew from the Greek we get a good Hebrew text and we are immediately in the Jewish world of 30-40 C.E. "Secrets" is a Qumranic term, the Kingdom of God is the rabbinic *malchut shamayim*. Thus, as in other Gospel contexts, Jesus is shown as picking up Qumranic and rabbinic terms and combining them; we need not suppose that this passage is the invention of non-Jewish circles.

More importantly, the expression "seeing they shall not see and hearing they shall not hear" is a plain hint of Isaiah 6:9-10, in which the prophet is bidden to tell the people:

Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn, and be healed.

These verses, like so much of Isaiah, were on the lips of all Jews in the time of Jesus. He had only to hint at the special, classical Hebraism "seeing to see" and "hearing to hear" for all to recognize the kind of people whom he was describing. They knew Isaiah had spoken to his generation in supreme irony, much as a mother might to a rebellious child. Her hope—and the hope of Isaiah under God—is to shock the rebel into a right perception of his erroneous ways.

There are, then, excellent reasons for surmising that this saying is one of the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus and that the "so that" is a vital part of the hint of Isaiah. One might paraphrase the words of Jesus: "You are my disciples and have willingly followed me, so you understand what I am talking about. These other people have to be told as Isaiah told the people of his day, line upon line, precept upon precept. By using parables, I am trying to cure them of their spiritual blindness." Everything that we know of Jesus fits this interpretation—he taught in Hebrew, made wordplays on the Hebrew Scriptures as did the Essenes and the rabbis, and had a prophetic concern for his own people. Our New Testament problems, as Petuchowski has so well said, are mostly due to the ignorance of Jewish thought and expression in the first century—and, let me add, a failure to recognize Greek texts which have descended from literal translations of written Hebrew sources.