

WHEN IS A PARALLEL REALLY A PARALLEL? A TEST CASE: THE LUCAN PARABLES

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ANYONE who has ever used a Gospel synopsis knows the difficulty of determining just which passages should be matched in compiling a table of parallels. As most modern synopses stand, at least certain sets of parallels present fairly blatant contradictions between Gospels which call into question the trustworthiness of the Gospel tradition.¹ Many apparent discrepancies affect areas of seemingly little doctrinal or ethical importance, but when one examines the teaching ascribed to Jesus, the problem becomes more acute. Even those who would restrict the accuracy of Scripture to matters of faith and practice must come to grips with the problem of the divergent forms of the various sayings of Jesus; here if anywhere is the very core of the biblical message. Yet even here Gospel parallels present striking similarities side-by-side with marked divergences — consider the details of Jesus' great sermon (Matthew 5–7 vs. Luke 6:17–49), of his commissioning of the twelve (Matthew 10 vs. Luke 9:1–6), and of pairs of parables like the pounds and talents (Matt 25:14–30 vs. Luke 19:11–27), the wedding feast and great supper (Matt 22:1–14 vs. Luke 14:15–24), and the two versions of the lost sheep (Matt 18:12–14 vs. Luke 15:4–7).

This problem of parallels has elicited a variety of responses. Most scholars accept the synopses as printed and harbor no reservations as to the presence of contradictions. In the wrong hands, the methodological tool of redaction criticism, which focuses on the distinctive contributions of each Gospel writer, is often abused so that it seems to do little more than invent new contradictions

¹ E.g. K. Aland, *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* (Stuttgart: UBS, 1976); A. Huck, *Synopse der drei ersten Evangelien* (rev. R. Greeven; Tübingen: Mohr, 1981); B. Orchard, *A Synopsis of the Four Gospels* (Macon: Mercer University, 1982).

between parallel texts at every turn.² More conservative scholars therefore sometimes overreact and call for the disuse rather than simply for the proper use of the tool. They may solve the problem by assuming that Jesus uttered virtually every sentence attributed to him at least two or three times in different contexts, even when the verbal parallelism between Gospels is so great as to make such a solution highly unlikely.³

The issue which remains almost entirely unaddressed in all this discussion forms the topic of this paper. When is a parallel really a parallel? Many writers simply state their opinions without giving any reasons for them. Those who elaborate usually just argue that the parallels seem too striking to have stemmed from separate events or that the differences seem too striking to have stemmed from the same event. But how striking is too striking? D. A. Carson, in what is probably the best introduction to the use and abuse of redaction criticism now available, notes that no methodology exists "for distinguishing between, on the one hand, similar sayings in separate Gospels that do reflect a trajectory of interpretation and, on the other, similar sayings in separate Gospels that are actually both authentic."⁴ Of course, one short essay can scarcely solve all the problems of Gospel parallels, but it can at least examine a test case. The test case offered here is the corpus of Lucan parables, several of which were already mentioned in

² It is unfortunate that one of the most well-written and widely-circulated introductions to this discipline (N. Perrin, *What Is Redaction Criticism?* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969]) comes from one of its most radical practitioners, thus perpetuating this stereotype in certain circles.

³ E.g. J. D. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981). Cf. also J. W. Montgomery, "Why Has God Incarnate Suddenly Become Mythical?" *Perspectives on Evangelical Theology* (ed. K. S. Kantzer and S. N. Gundry; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979) 57—65; R. Thomas, "The Hermeneutics of Evangelical Redaction Criticism" (paper read at the ETS national conference; Essex Fells, N. J., Dec. 17, 1982).

⁴ D. A. Carson, "Redaction Criticism: On the Legitimacy and Illegitimacy of a Literary Tool," *Scripture and Truth* (ed. D. A. Carson and J. Woodbridge; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983) 126. For other constructive evangelical critiques of redaction criticism, see M. Silva, "Ned B. Stonehouse and Redaction Criticism," *WTJ* 40 (1977) 77-88, 281-303; G. R. Osborne, "The Evangelical and Redaction Criticism: Critique and Methodology," *JETS* 22 (1979) 305-22; R. E. Morosco, "Redaction Criticism and the Evangelical: Matthew 10 a Test Case," *ibid.*, 323-31.

the above examples of problem passages. Hopefully, the conclusions arrived at will have some wider applicability as well.

The Gospel of Luke contains more than twice as many parables as any other Gospel. Most of those peculiar to Luke fall into his central section (9:51-18:34)⁵ and probably stem from a very primitive Jewish-Christian source document to which only Luke, of the evangelists, had access.⁶ At the same time, Luke records no less than fourteen parables for which most scholars find parallels in either Matthew or Mark or both.⁷ These vary from the short parable of the householder and thief (Luke 12:39-40; Matt 24:43-44), which displays almost exact verbal parallelism in Matthew and Luke, to the parables of the watchful servants (Luke 12:35-38) and doorkeeper (Mark 13:33-37), which contain certain conceptual similarities but virtually no words repeated verbatim.

A brief statistical analysis reflects this variety in parallelism. The chart below presents the number of words common to each of the fourteen pairs of parables. The first two columns, labeled (I) and (II), list the total number of words contained in the Greek text of Luke's version of the parable,⁸ followed by the total number of words in the most closely paralleled passage (either Matthew or Mark). Then come three columns which list (a) the total number of words in Luke's account which appear in identical form in the "parallel," (b) the number of words which are common to both texts but in different lexical or grammatical form, and (c) the number of words in Luke which are clear synonyms for corresponding words in the other text. Finally, three percentages are tabulated in columns (d), (e), and (f) : (a)/x,

⁵ For a discussion of which passages are to be considered parables, and for a defense of these boundaries for Luke's central section, see C. L. Blomberg, "The Tradition History of the Parables Peculiar to Luke's Central Section" (Ph.D. Diss.: Aberdeen, 1982) 28-37, 50-58.

⁶ Cf. C. L. Blomberg, "Midrash, Chiasmus, and the Outline of Luke's Central Section," *Gospel Perspectives* (ed. R. T. France and D. Wenham; Sheffield: JSOT, 1983) 3.217-61.

⁷ Interestingly enough, this accounts for all the potentially paralleled parables in the Synoptics, since Matthew and Mark do not have any parables in common not also found in Luke.

⁸ Following Aland (*Synopsis*) by including bracketed words, but only including Jesus' direct speech and not additional contextual material.

Parable	Texts	(I)	(II)	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)
(1) Housholder and thief	Luke 12:39-40 Matt 24:43-44	34	39	29	2	3	85.3	91.2	100.0
(2) Faithful and unfaithful servants	Luke 12:42-46 Matt 24:45-51	102	111	83	5	4	81.4	86.3	90.2
(3) Leaven	Luke 13:20-21 Matt 13:33	21	19	15	3	1	78.9	94.7	100.0
(4) Asking son	Luke 11:11-13 Matt 7:9-11	48	50	34	2	2	70.8	75.0	79.2
(5) Children in marketplace	Luke 7:31-35 Matt 11:16-19	76	65	45	14	2	69.2	90.8	93.8
(6) Sower	Luke 8:5-8 Matt 4:3-9	76	105	44	11	7	57.9	72.4	81.5
(7) Wicked Husbandmen	Luke 20:9b-16a Matt 12:1-9	120	131	64	11	6	53.3	62.5	67.5
(8) Mustard seed	Luke 13:18-19 Matt 13:31-32	38	45	19	5	4	50.0	63.2	73.7
(9) Two builders	Luke 6:47-49 Matt 7:24-27	83	95	21	16	3	25.3	41.5	44.6
(10) Lost sheep/ wandering sheep	Luke 15:4-7 Matt 18:12-14	81	65	15	12	2	23.1	30.4	41.5
(11) Pounds/ talents	Luke 19:12-27 Matt 25:14-30	253	302	54	23	28	21.3	30.4	41.5
(12) Animals in well/sheep in pit	Luke 14:5 Matt 12:11	17	22	2	6	1	11.7	47.1	52.9
(13) Great supper/ wedding banquet	Luke 14:16-24 Matt 22:2-10	159	151	10	14	4	6.3	15.9	17.6
(14) Watchful servants/ doorkeeper	Luke 12:35-38 Matt 13:33-37	67	66	2	4	3	3.0	9.1	13.6
		words in Luke	words in paral.	word verbatim	words diff. forms	synonym	(a)/x	a+b/x	a+b+c/x

$[(a) + (b)]/x$, and $[(a) + (b) + (c)]/x$, where x in each case stands for the smaller figure in columns (I) and (II). In other words, the number of parallel words is compared in each case with the total number of words in the shorter of the two parallel texts. It is important to choose the shorter text, because the longer text could be dependent on the shorter but have so expanded the original that the number of words it would share with the shorter version would seem deceptively small.

The chart reveals three basic categories of parables. The first eight entries show great verbal similarity to their parallels in all three percentage columns: 50.0%—85.3% in (d), 62.5%—94.7% in (e), and 73.7%—100.0% in (f). These parables also distribute themselves fairly evenly over these intervals. The next four parables form a second group, with markedly lower percentages in column (d), 11.7%—25.3%, though with somewhat higher figures in columns (e) and (f), 30.4%—47.1% and 41.5%—52.9% respectively. The last two parables form a third group, with very low percentages in all three columns: 3.0%—6.3% in (d), 9.1%—15.9% in (e), and 13.6%—17.6% in (f). The fairly clear-cut categories into which these data subdivide predispose one who has studied basic statistical methods to suggest that passages in one category differ from those in another in some significant way.⁹ Quite naturally, one suspects that the pairs of parables in the first category are (as is generally assumed) dependent on one another or on a common source, while passages in the last category are (as is not always assumed) independent of each other or any common source. The status of the parables in the middle group remains unclear.

It is remarkable how often writers who wish to illustrate the presence of irreconcilable contradictions between the Gospels appeal to the examples of the parables in these last two categories. Jeremias, for example, in what undoubtedly remains the definitive work on the tendencies of the parables' transmission, bases his discussion of embellishment, change of audience, the effect of the delay of the Parousia, and allegorization to a large extent on these

⁹ For further detail, see any introductory statistics text. E.g. H. L. Alder and E. B. Roessler, *Introduction to Probability and Statistics* (San Francisco: Freeman, 1975).

specific pairs of parables.¹⁰ If it were to turn out that they were not genuine parallels after all, much *Traditionsgeschichte* would require rewriting. It is precisely this point which shall be argued below. Few would dispute that literary dependence of some sort is required to account for the degree of similarity between parallel versions of the first eight parables on our chart.¹¹ Five of the remaining six sets of parallels, however, seem rather to represent parables which Jesus spoke in more than one form on separate occasions, so that differences between the various accounts do not retain their standard significance. Each of the pairs of parables numbered (9) through (14) on the chart will therefore be examined, in turn, in order of increasing parallelism.

I. The Watchful Servants/Doorkeeper (Luke 12:35–38; Mark 13:33–37)

The main argument for the independence of these two passages lies in their sheer lack of verbal agreement. The only two words which appear in identical form and location in both parables are "the master" (ho kyrios), and the same expression appears frequently in Jesus' parables elsewhere (in Luke, cf. 13:8; 14:21–23; 16:8; 19:16–25). Four terms appear in different grammatical forms — anthropos, doulos, erchomai, and gregoreo — but one could hardly narrate a parable about a man leaving servants to watch over his household without employing these terms. Virtually all the remaining features differ wherever they can — the reason for the man's departure, the number of servants, the tasks entrusted to them, the reaction of the master on his return, and

¹⁰ J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1972) 27–28, 38–41, 53–55, 58–70.

¹¹ Some commentators view Luke's shorter versions of the parables of the sower and wicked husbandmen as evidence for a pre-Markan source, because more primitive texts are often thought to be shorter than secondary ones. Cf. esp. T. Schramm, *Der Markus-Stoff bei Lukas* (Cambridge: CUP, 1971) 114–23; M. Lowe, "From the Parable of the Vineyard to a Pre-Synoptic Source," *NTS* 28 (1982) 257–63. But this "law" has been disproven; see E. P. Sanders (*The Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition* [Cambridge: CUP, 1969]) — and, in fact, Luke consistently abbreviates his Marcan material. Of the 92 pericopes in Aland (*Synopsis*) which Mark and Luke share, Luke's version is shorter in 71 instances. Cf. Blomberg, "Tradition History," 25–27.

the description of the divisions of time during his absence. Granted that a specific teaching is in view and not just the narration of an event, and granted the Synoptists' propensity for close verbal parallelism elsewhere (see the chart), it seems unlikely that these accounts reflect the same original parable of Jesus.

This intuition seems borne out by the lack of consensus among recent commentators on these two passages. At least four contradictory positions command considerable acclaim. (1) Bultmann views the watchful servants as a secondary composition or "community formulation"¹² which has inextricably intertwined passages like Mark 13:33-36 and Matt 24:42, 45-51.¹³ (2) Others view the parable as strictly a reworking and expansion of the Marcan passage.¹⁴ (3) Still others see primarily the influence of Matthew (even of his parable of the ten virgins) and assign the parable to Q.¹⁵ (4) Finally, some consider the parable literally independent of Mark's and Matthew's traditions, noting (as the chart above indicates) how little verbal parallelism with either of these Gospels it actually demonstrates.¹⁶

While the first three positions together account for the views of a sizable majority of commentators, not one of them stands out as clearly dominant. This fact alone reveals that the various types of parallelism perceived are not that obvious. Position (4),

¹² R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1963) 118, 205.

¹³ E. Grasser, *Das Problem der Parusieverzögerung in den synoptischen Evangelien und in der Apostelgeschichte* (Berlin: Topelmann, 1960) 85.

¹⁴ E.g. Jeremias, *Parables*, 53; C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London: Nisbet, 1935) 161; C. E. Carlston, *The Parables of the Triple Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 84.

¹⁵ E.g. T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1949) 115; G. Schneider, *Parusiegleichnisse im Lukasevangelium* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1975) 32; W. Schmithals, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1980) 147.

¹⁶ C. W. F. Smith, *The Jesus of the Parables* (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1975) 177; H. Weder, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu als Metaphern* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978) 163; W. Michaelis, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu* (Hamburg: Furche Verlag, 1956) 86; A. R. C. Leaney, *The Gospel according to St. Luke* (London: Black, 1958) 201; W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1966) 264; E. E. Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke* (London: Oliphants, 1974) 179; S. Kistemaker, *The Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 116.

moreover, commands substantial assent as well, although not all who adopt it make the additional move from literary to historical independence. The case for the position is not watertight, but additional comments below will reinforce it further.¹⁷ For now it seems fair to conclude, with I. H. Marshall, that the Lucan parable

has a more positive character of promise. The two parables may reflect one original parable, handed down in the two separate traditions, but this presupposes considerable freedom on the part of the tradition and it is perhaps more likely that the tradition reflects different forms in which Jesus conveyed the same basic teaching.¹⁸

If this conclusion is wrong, the next most likely explanation is none of the three alternatives noted above. Rather it is possible that Mark and Luke have both drawn selectively from a pre-Synoptic version of the eschatological discourse, longer than any of the current Gospel versions. A thorough analysis of this view awaits the publication of David Wenham's forthcoming monograph, *The Rediscovery of Jesus' Eschatological Discourse*.¹⁹

II. The Great Supper/Wedding Banquet (Luke 14:16-24, Matt 22:1-14)

Most scholars assign Luke's parable of the great supper to Q without hesitation. Yet no small number of commentators have challenged this consensus, preferring to view the parable not as the product of an immediate written source which Luke and Matthew shared, but either as one story passed along in variant but chiefly independent traditions,²⁰ or as two separate similar stories in which Jesus employed a common theme.²¹

¹⁷ See section V, last paragraph.

¹⁸ I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 537.

¹⁹ D. Wenham, *The Rediscovery of Jesus' Eschatological Discourse* (Sheffield: JSOT, forthcoming). Dr. Wenham has kindly shared preliminary drafts of several sections of his work with me.

²⁰ Dodd, *Parables*, 121; Grundmann, *Lukas*, 296; J. A. Findlay, *Jesus and His Parables* (London: Epworth, 1950) 54; E. Linnemann, *Parables of Jesus* (London: SPCK, 1966) 166 n. 20; J. Ernst, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1977) 422; D. H. van Daalen, *The Kingdom of God Is like This* (London: Epworth, 1976) 44.

²¹ Smith, *Parables*, 120; Kistemaker, *Parables*, 100, 198 ; R. W. Funk,

Once again the statistics favor this last view. Only ten of over 150 words are identical in both texts, and of these ten words only two (*apesteilen* and *agron*) are not conjunctions, articles, or pronouns. Noteworthy terms occurring in different forms include *anthropos*, *poieo*, *kaleo*, *doulos*, *hoi keklemenoi*, *orgizomai*, and *poreuomai*, but these scarcely stand out in view of the great differences which otherwise distinguish Luke from Matthew — the man vs. the king, the supper vs. the wedding banquet, the absence of the son, the additional invitations, the reduction of servants, the difference in excuses, the absence of retributive warfare, the introduction of the "poor, maimed, blind, and lame," the addition of the climax pronouncing judgment on the original guests, and the absence of the incident of the man without a wedding garment.

Most commentators have explained these differences by assuming that Matthew has expanded and allegorized a parable much like Luke's, in view of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and juxtaposed an originally separate parable about the man without festal clothing. Luke, on the other hand, has added the second invitation to the outcasts, in light of the extension of the proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles. K. H. Rengstorf, however, has demonstrated that the Matthean parable is quite realistic in light of earlier historical incidents with which Jesus' audiences would have been familiar.²² Compared with unquestioned examples of vaticinium ex eventu concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, Matt 22:6–7 seems relatively tame.²³ Simon

Language, Hermeneutic and the Word of God (New York: Harper & Row, 1966) 163; H. Palmer. "Just Married, Cannot Come (Mt 22, Lk 14, Thos 44, Dt 20)," *NovT* 18 (1976) 255; A. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Luke* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1896) 395 n. 4; N. Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (NICNT; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1950) 395 n. 4; L. Morris, *The Gospel according to St. Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 233; E. Galbiati, "Gli invitati al convito (Luca 14, 16-24)," *BeO* 7 (1965) 130.

²² K. H. Rengstorf, "Die Stadt der Morder (Matt. 22:7)," *Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche* (ed. W. Eltester; Berlin: Topelmann, 1960) 106-29.

²³ See the well-balanced remarks of J. A. T. Robinson (*Redating the New Testament* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976] 19-21). The objection that no evidence exists for this custom in Jesus' day proves little, since neither is there evidence that it had fallen into disuse, while both pre- and post-NT sources attest to its practice. Cf. further, W. Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973) 797-98.

Kistemaker, moreover, points out that Matt 22:1–14 forms a unity. The enigma of the man just pulled off the street and expected to have proper banqueting attire is solved by recognizing that the king would have provided the necessary clothing, so that the man's behavior reflects deliberate rejection of the king's invitation.²⁴ Kenneth Bailey, finally, emphasizes the precedent for the extension of the gospel to the Gentiles both in the OT and elsewhere in the teaching of Jesus, so that the Lucan parable need not reflect later redaction at this point.²⁵ It seems likely, however, that Jesus intended no allegorical reference here at all. If the servant's initial mission did not fill all the places at his master's table, it would have been natural to press the search farther afield. "Highways" and "hedges" (Luke 14:23) are not known symbols for Gentile territory in other Jewish literature, and in the context of the parable they remain entirely within Israel.²⁶

In addition to the traditional arguments for Matthew's redaction of this parable, commentators must now come to grips with Robert Gundry's massive new work on the first Gospel.²⁷ It is virtually impossible either to endorse or to reject his analysis of any individual passage without first evaluating the methodology supporting his overall study. The scopes of this paper prevents such a detailed critique; fortunately a few have begun to appear.²⁸ *In nuce*, Gundry argues that virtually every word with which Matthew differs from Mark or Luke represents Matthew's own creation or revision of his sources, which are limited to Mark and Q. Thus even two parables as divergent as Luke's prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32) and Matthew's two sons (Matt 21:28–32) become attributed to one original.²⁹ The equation of the six pairs

²⁴ Kistemaker, *Parables*, 104.

²⁵ K. E. Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes: More Lucan Parables* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 101-8.

²⁶ Cf. Smith, *Parables*, 123; Funk, *Language*, 183-86; Schmithals, *Lukas*, 160.

²⁷ R. H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).

²⁸ See esp. D. A. Carson, "Gundry on Matthew: A Critical Review," *TrinJ* n.s. 3 (1982) 71–91; P. B. Payne, "Midrash and History in the Gospels, with Special Reference to R. H. Gundry's Matthew," *Gospel Perspectives* 3.177–215.

²⁹ Gundry, *Matthew*, 422.

of parables from Matthew and Luke under analysis here follows almost automatically.

Two general comments, however, place a question mark against this approach. First, Gundry has vastly overestimated the amount of peculiarly Matthean material, including "insertions" into Mark and Q, which can be argued to reflect Matthew's distinctive style, via statistical criteria. The best discussion of vocabulary statistics for Gospel criticism appears in Lloyd Gaston's *Horae synopticae electronicae*.³⁰ Gundry is at least aware of Gaston, for he cites him, if only as an example of the method he rejects, but it is not clear if he has thoroughly understood him. Gundry prefers his own method, which "reflects an openness to Matthean creativity," whereas Gaston assigns unparalleled sentences "to earlier traditions of a piecemeal sort."³¹ On the contrary, Gaston makes clear that his use of symbols like "L" and "M" is purely conventional; he explicitly assumes nothing about the source-critical origin of unparalleled sentences, but simply wants to avoid the trap into which Gundry falls of assuming that partially parallel pericopes must entirely reflect redactional activity where they differ. Gaston's method reflects substantial openness to redactional creativity, whereas Gundry's presuppositions virtually compel such a conclusion.³²

Second, the majority of Gundry's specific comments on a given passage do not demonstrate Matthean redaction; they assume it. Thus to return to the parable of the wedding feast, one discovers that Matthew's "king" (22:2, vs. Luke's "man" — 15:16) derives from the preceding parable of the wicked husbandmen where Matthew alone refers to God's "kingdom" (21:43). The addition of the king's son "reflects the prominence of sons in the preceding two parables" and "renews a Christological emphasis". And the burning of the city in v 7 "illustrates Matthew's habit of alluding to the Old Testament"; here the allusion is to Isa 5:24-25.³³ Some of these suggestions are more probable than others. If Matthew

³⁰ L. Gaston, *Horae synopticae electronicae* (Missoula: SBL, 1973).

³¹ Gundry, *Matthew*, 4.

³² Gaston, *Horae*, 4-6. For a detailed discussion of Gaston's method and an application of a slightly modified version of it to Lucan and Pauline writings, see Blomberg, "Tradition History," 312-38.

³³ Gundry, *Matthew*, 433-36.

had been inspired to change the man to a king based on the word "kingdom," the more logical (and nearer) antecedent would be in 22:2a, and not in the preceding parable. Similarly the parallels between Matt 22:7 and Isa 5:24-25 are not as close as those with Jer 25:4-11; 29:16-19; and 44:4-6;³⁴ or even with Zeph 1:1-16, which Gundry dismisses as insignificant.³⁵ But even if all of these explanations of the differences between Matthew's and Luke's parables are correct, none presupposes any creative activity which Jesus himself could not have performed. The case for Matthean creation reverts back to vocabulary statistics.

In these examples *basileus*, *huios*, *apollymi*, and *polis* are the most decisive Mattheanisms, yet even by Gundry's standards these are among the weaker candidates for Matthew's favorite vocabulary.³⁶ More to the point, even where redactional material occurs, one may not automatically jump to claims of inauthenticity. Of course the evangelists utilized their distinctive styles, and selected traditions based on their own interests. Discerning the patterns of these interests demonstrates the profound theological importance of redaction criticism. But a historical conclusion that redactional material does not reflect authentic tradition, however freely rewritten, can only follow if there is something contradictory or implausible about attributing the material to its alleged *Sitz im Leben Jesu*.³⁷ When Gundry abandons the interpretation of Matt 22:6-7 as a flashback to A.D. 70³⁸ the major objection to authenticity also vanishes.

Finally, a comparison with the Talmudic parable attributed to Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai (one of the early Tannaim) proves instructive. In b. Sabb. 153a one reads:

³⁴ S. Pedersen, "Zum Problem der vaticinia ex eventu (Eine Analyse von Mt. 21, 33-46 par.; 22, 1-10 par)," *ST* 19 (1965) 181-85.

³⁵ Gundry, *Matthew*, 439; pace J. D. M. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd) 127-28.

³⁶ Gundry, *Matthew*, 641-49. *Apollymi* and *polis* actually occur more often in Luke than in Matthew. *Basileus* in parables is distinctively Matthean, however, and M. D. Goulder ("Characteristics of the Parables in the Several Gospels," *JTS* 19 [1968] 53-55) uses this as one reason for arguing that none of the Matthean parables is authentic.

³⁷ A profound methodological debate lies behind this claim. See further S. C. Goetz and C. L. Blomberg, "The Burden of Proof," *JSNT* 11 (1981) 39-63; D. A. Carson, "Redaction Criticism," 126, 140.

³⁸ Gundry, *Matthew*, 436.

R. Johanan b. Zakkai said: This may be compared to a king who summoned his servants to a banquet without appointing a time. The wise ones adorned themselves and sat at the door of the palace, [‘for,'] said they, ‘is anything lacking in a royal palace?’ The fools went about their work, saying, ‘can there be a banquet without preparations?’ Suddenly the king desired [the presence of his servants; the wise entered adorned, while the fools entered soiled. The king rejoiced at the wise but was angry with the fools. ‘Those who adorned themselves for the banquet,’ ordered he, ‘let them sit, eat and drink. But those who did not adorn themselves for the banquets let them stand and watch.’ [Soncino ed.]

The similarities between this parable and both Matt 22:1-10 and 11-14, which are almost always separated from each other by tradition criticism, are obvious. There are also clear "parallels" with the parable of the ten virgins (Matt 25:1-13). Yet almost no one conversant with the Rabbinic literature argues that this or any other Tannaitic parable developed out of familiarity with the Jesus tradition.³⁹ This should caution us against too quickly attributing equally similar yet dissimilar pairs of parables in the Gospels to one common *Grundschrift*.⁴⁰ Both the Lucan great supper and the Matthean wedding feast parables remain intelligible as wholly authentic and distinct utterances of Jesus.

III. The Animals in the Well/Sheep in the Pit (Luke 14:5, Matt 12:11)

Both of these short parabolic sayings occur in the contexts of narratives about Jesus' healing on the Sabbath. In Luke, Jesus has just healed a man with dropsy before dinner at the home of a Pharisee. In Matthew the setting is the healing of the man with the withered hand, which Luke recounts in 6:6-11, but with this little parable notably absent. Did Matthew know the saying from some other source and interpolate it into his version of the Marcan miracle?⁴¹ Was this source Q, and could Luke thus have gotten

³⁹ Although R. M. Johnston ("Parabolic Interpretations Attributed to Tannaim" [Ph.D. Diss.: Hartford Seminary Foundation, 1978] 205) tentatively suggests this possibility.

⁴⁰ For an interesting comparison of how R. Johanan's parable underwent development in the Rabbinic tradition, cf. *Midr. Qoh.* 9.8.1, which intersperses verbatim quotation of the Talmudic form with "targumized" commentary and embellishments.

⁴¹ J. M. Creed, *The Gospel according to St. Luke* (London: Macmillan, 1930) 188.

it, and perhaps all of 14:1-6, from this sayings source?⁴² Or "hat Lukas die Erzählung seinem Sondergut entnommen"?⁴³ The higher percentage of variant forms and synonyms (columns [e] and [f] in the above chart) may mislead somewhat in such a short passage; the presence of only two identical words in both verses seems more significant, and these are merely the incidental *hymon* and *eis*. The differences are all the more striking if one adopts the variant *huios e bous* (instead of *onos e bous*) in Luke 14:5,⁴⁴ although J. M. Ross argues that in this case the more difficult reading is too difficult and destroys the *a fortiori* logic of the passage.⁴⁵ In any event, the unparalleled nature of Luke 14:1–4 and 6 combines with the perfect fit of v 5 into this context to render it quite improbable that the parable is a variant of Matt 12:11. And the fit of the Matthean verse in its context is no less satisfactory, even if Matthew's source (in this case Mark) omits it.⁴⁶

IV. The Pounds/Talents (Luke 19:11-27, Matt 25:14–30)

This pair of parables displays many of the same types of similarities and differences as do the parables of the great supper and wedding feast. Matthew's version is again longer and apparently more embellished the talent was valued at sixty times the pound, the man went away "for a long time" (*polyn chronon*), presumably reflecting the delay of the Parousia, the unfaithful servant did not merely hide his money in a napkin but dug a hole in the ground for it, and his punishment involved not just losing the money entrusted him but being cast into the outer darkness. On the other hand, Luke adds several features not found in Matthew — the master is a nobleman who leaves to receive a kingdom, and his citizens oppose him and send an embassy to thwart his mission. At the end of the parable, the nobleman rewards his servants with authority over cities and commands his enemies to be slain in his presence.

⁴² So Ernst, *Lukas*, 435-37.

⁴³ Grundmann, *Lukas*, 291.

⁴⁴ So UBSGNT; cf. Marshall, *Luke*, 579-80.

⁴⁵ J. M. Ross, "The 'Harder Reading' in Textual Criticism," *BT* 33 (1982) 138-39.

⁴⁶ Gundry (*Matthew*, 226) assumes Matthew has conflated Luke 15:4 and 14:5 with necessary alterations to smooth out the seam.

Not surprisingly, quite a number of theories compete for acceptance concerning these parables' tradition history. Perhaps the most common view is that Luke's parable of the pounds has fused or conflated two separate parables one very similar to Matthew's and one about the throne claimant just described. By removing vv 12, 14, 15a, 27, and the references to cities in vv 17 and 19, one can almost piece these details together into a separate story, which very much reflects the type of incident known to first-century Palestinians from the trip of Archelaus to Rome in 4 B.C., and the Jewish embassy which opposed him and incurred Archelaus' subsequent revenge.⁴⁷ If this view is correct, it is probable that both of these parables go back to Jesus and that they were fused at some pre-Lucan stage of the tradition, since Luke elsewhere does not interweave separate stories so intricately.⁴⁸ Others, however, feel that the additions about the throne claimant can be sufficiently explained in terms of Luke's redactional interest, whether or not it was ever a separate parable.⁴⁹ Still other approaches include the views that the two parables are literarily, though not historically, independent,⁵⁰ that the standard tendencies of oral tradition have modified a basic Q-form of the parable

⁴⁷ Jeremias, *Parables*, 58—59. L. C. McGaughey ("The Fear of Yahweh and the Mission of Judaism: A Postexilic Maxim and Its Early Christian Expansion in the Parable of the Talents," *JBL* 94 [1975] 235-45) discerns a third separate section in v 26.

⁴⁸ F. D. Weinert, "The Parable of the Throne Claimant (Luke 19:12, 14—15a, 27) Reconsidered," *CBQ* 39 (1977) 505—14; M. Zerwick, "Die Parabel vom Thronanwärter," *Bib* 40 (1959) 654—74. W. Resenhofft ("Jesu Gleichnis von den Talenten, ergänzt durch die Lukas-Fassung," *NTS* 26 [1980] 318—31) believes that the "parable" of the throne claimant ended originally with the words of Matt 22:6-7.

⁴⁹ J. Lambrecht, *Parables of Jesus* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1978) 251—52; S. Schulz, *Q: Die Spruchquelle der Evangelisten* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1972) 288-92; M. Didier, "La parabole des talents et des mines," *De Jesus aux Evangiles* (ed. I. de la Potterie; Gembloux: Duculot, 1967) 248—71.

⁵⁰ K. H. Rengstorf, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1937) 217; Manson, *Sayings*, 313. A. Weiser (*Die Knechtsgleichnisse der synoptischen Evangelien* [München: Kosel, 1971] 229-48) gives detailed linguistic arguments for equating these traditions with M and L. Smith (*Parables*, 139) prefers to think of oral traditions as the primary cause of the variations. Marshall (*Luke*, 702) suggests different recensions

in two separate ways,⁵¹ or that Matthew has abbreviated his source which more closely approximated the Lucan form.⁵² Gundry argues that Matthew has conflated Mark 13:34 and "a tradition preserved without much revision in Luke 19:11-27," but he has no explanation for the omission of the throne claimant material, material which ought to interest Matthew immensely, granted Gundry's previous observations concerning "king-parables."⁵³

As with the parables of the doorkeeper and watchful servants, the sheer diversity of theories should prevent one from too easily adopting any simple explanation of literary dependence. The percentages of verbal parallelism are certainly higher, but still a far cry from those for the pairs of parables which are unquestionably parallel. Moreover, one statistic stands out strikingly. Of the total number of words in any way paralleled in the two parables, an inordinately large proportion fall into column (c) — apparent synonyms. For virtually every other entry in the chart, this column accounts for only a small percentage of the total parallelism. Among the undoubted parallels, the highest percentage is 14.3% (4/28) for the parable of the mustard seed, while most of the percentages are less than 9%. Here, however, it accounts for 28 out of 105 words, or 26.7%. Such a large figure at the very least suggests independent oral traditions, if not completely separate originals altogether.

In fact, a number of scholars have argued that two separate parables from the life of Jesus do lie behind these texts.⁵⁴ The sayings that are most closely parallel ("Well done, good servant" — v 17, cf. Matt 25:21; "reaping what I did not sow" — vv 21-22, cf. Matt 25:24, 26; "to everyone who has will more be given" — v 26, cf. Matt 25:29; and the like) are those which are almost proverbial and most likely to be used repeatedly and re-

⁵¹ E. Kamlah, "Kritik and Interpretation der Parabel von der anvertrauten Geldern," *KD* 14 (1968) 31—34; Grasser, *Parusieverzögerung*, 113.

⁵² M.-J. Lagrange, *Evangile selon Saint Luc* (Paris: Gabalda, 1941) 491; J. Schmid, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1960) 288-91.

⁵³ Gundry, *Matthew*, 371; cf. n. 36 above.

⁵⁴ E.g. Geldenhuys, *Luke*, 476 n. 6; Morris, *Luke*, 273; Plummer, *Luke*, 437; W. Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979) 858; Kistemaker, *Parables*, 138-39; H. C. Thiessen, "The Parable of the Nobleman and the Earthly Kingdom," *BSac* 91 (1934) 180-90.

produced without change.⁵⁵ W. O. E. Oesterley surmises that "we have here another illustration of the existence of a current parabolic theme upon which the parable is constructed." But unlike those cases where "the theme may be susceptible of more than one lesson," here it is one "from which only a single lesson can be deduced: so that, if two parables are constructed upon such a theme, they are in one sense distinct, but as both are based on a common source, they are also in some sense identical."⁵⁶ J. G. Simpson, however, thinks the parable of the pounds makes two main points, one on the responsibility required of Jesus' disciples and one on the judgment of those who reject his message. Both types of people would have been in his audience. Elsewhere Jesus takes up only the former theme (the parable of the talents) or only the latter (the parable of the wicked husbandmen), but here he gives his fullest statement both of his rejection of contemporary apocalyptic and of his true mission on earth.⁵⁷

The alternatives appear less convincing. The position that sees a separate "throne claimant" parable in Luke is deceptively attractive. William Green showed long ago how easy it was artificially to create two fairly coherent narratives out of one by sheer imaginative skill, with his tongue-in-cheek source-critical division of the parables of the good Samaritan and prodigal son.⁵⁸ Nor is the "parable" of the throne claimant even all that coherent in its reconstructed form. Syntactically, v 15a requires supplementation, and the references to the rewards of cities in vv 17 and 19 presuppose the presence of some faithful subjects who are otherwise absent from this "parable." The entire story, moreover, is quite brief and harsh, with the climactic pronouncement of v 27 rendering the new king's behavior quite arbitrary. Most importantly, as Jouon observes, the throne claimant is left with a kingdom which has no subjects; the faithful servants must be retained

⁵⁵ Cf. T. Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Lucas* (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1913) 624-28.

⁵⁶ W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Gospel Parables in the Light of Their Jewish Background* (London: SPC'K, 1936) 144.

⁵⁷ J. G. Simpson, "The Parable of the Pounds," *ExpTim* 37 (1925—26) 300-302.

⁵⁸ W. H. Green, *The Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch* (New York: Scribner's, 1895) 119-23.

in order to give the story any verisimilitude.⁵⁹ Of the other views that see only one original parable, the independent traditions theory seems most probable. For, as Weiser has shown, both parables contain a number of formulations peculiar to M and L, Q parables generally have a much more concise form ("oft spruchartige und eher den Bildworten als den Parabeln nahestehende Redeformen"), and neither Luke's addition nor Matthew's omission of the throne claimant parable is likely since (as noted above) it is Matthew and not Luke who prefers parables about kings and judgment. Finally, Luke does not elsewhere conflate parables, especially with this intricacy.⁶⁰

The remaining question for one who would argue for two separate parables here is whether or not Luke's apparently composite account can stand on its own as a coherent whole. There are a number of minor problems which can be overcome fairly readily,⁶¹ but by far the most troubling occurs in v 20. Although Luke describes the nobleman calling ten servants and distributing ten pounds in v 13, when the servants return for their rewards, only three come forward, and yet the third is called *ho heteros* ("the other one").⁶² Some have argued that this expression refers to a different class or type of servant, that is, the type that did not invest as commanded,⁶³ but this is not a well-attested meaning for the expression.⁶⁴

Perhaps a better solution is to translate *ho heteros* as "the next." The phrase *te hetera hemera* appears frequently in Greek to mean "on the next day,"⁶⁵ and in Matt 10:23, RSV translates *en to polei taute . . . eis ten heteran* as "in one town . . . to the next."⁶⁶ Most commentators pass over this point in view of the more perplexing exegetical questions surrounding this verse, but already a century ago John Lange observed that "the definite

⁵⁹ P. Jouon, "La parabole des mines et la parabole des talents," *RSR* 29 (1939) 493.

⁶⁰ Weiser, *Knechtsgleichnisse*, 256.,E

⁶¹ See Blomberg, "Tradition History," 266—73.

⁶² This problem is obscured in translations like *RSV*, *NIV*, which unjustifiably translate it as "another."

⁶³ Geldenhuys, *Luke*, 428; Plummer, *Luke*, 441; Morris, *Luke*, 275.

⁶⁴ Cf. Marshall, *Luke*, 706.

⁶⁵ BAGD, 315.

⁶⁶ So also BDF, par. 306 (2).

article before *allen* or *heteran* denotes the next city in order which had not yet been visited."⁶⁷ A similar translation makes good sense of Luke 4:43: "But he said to them that it was necessary for him to preach the kingdom of God also in the next cities (*tais heterais polesin*). The translation, "the other cities," seems to suggest specific locations previously mentioned, but none appears in the context of this verse. The translation "next" fits Luke 19:20 exactly; *ho heteros* could thus imply the next servant in order who had not yet been summoned to give an account of his stewardship. Having presented three servants (two good and one bad), the form and content of the parable were complete, so no further servants needed to be mentioned.⁶⁸ Moreover, Jouon observes that the larger number of servants in Luke accords with the larger audience for the parable. Both the twelve and a larger group of followers are in view — thus the details concerning three and also the broader reference to ten. In Matthew, Jesus just addresses the disciples and therefore needs mention only the three.⁶⁹ The problem of different audiences will recur momentarily, but for now enough has been said to conclude that the parables of the pounds and talents are not genuine parallels, but two separate elaborations of a basic theme which Jesus utilized on (at least) two different occasions.

V. The Lost Sheep/Wandering Sheep (Luke 15:4-7, Matt 18:12-14)

The two parables of the lost sheep in Matthew and Luke form the final entry in this list of not genuinely parallel parables. The decision to place them in this list is perhaps hardest of all. Here the statistics suggest little; here too only a small minority doubts that Matthew's parable comes from the same source as Luke's. Moreover, unlike with the parables of the pounds and talents, key differences reflect characteristic Matthean and Lucan emphases.

⁶⁷ J. P. Lange, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1871) 192 n. 1.

⁶⁸ Cf. Schmid, *Lukas*, 288-89: ". . . ist dies nicht als storende Unebenheit des Lukas-Textes der Parabel zu deuten, wie die genau entsprechenden Falk 14, 18-20 and 16, 5-7 bestatigen. Eine Vorfuhrung aller zehn wurde ermudend wirken and den poetischen Wert des Gleichnisses beeintrachtigen."

⁶⁹ Jouon, "Mines," 494.

The closing sentences, for example, clearly disclose prominent redactional themes: Matthew's concern for the "little ones" (*hoi mikroi*) which links 18:14 with vv 10, 6, and 3, and Luke's emphasis on the joy of repentance, linking with the following parables of the lost coin and lost son.

Nevertheless notable dissenters deserve a hearing. T. W. Manson believes that "it is more likely that we have here a case of the overlapping of sources, and that the Matthaean version belongs to M and the Lucan to L."⁷⁰ C. W. F. Smith observes all the differences between the two accounts and judges that the "two versions came down in the tradition separately."⁷¹ Oesterley thinks it more likely that in characteristic Rabbinic fashion, "we have here another instance of a parabolic theme being used for more than one purpose."⁷² Streeter believes that the words which Matthew and Luke share are those "without which the story could not be told at all," but that "where the versions can differ, they do so," and thus that the accounts are independent.⁷³ Rengstorf notes that pairs of parables characterize Luke's peculiar material (cf. 11:5-8, 11-13; 14:28-30, 31-32; 16:1-13, 19-31) and so believes it likely that 15:4-7 and 8-10 stood together as an original unit in L.⁷⁴ Most important of all, Jeremias subjects the parable to careful linguistic analysis and concludes that Luke's version is literarily independent of Matthew.⁷⁵ Jeremias' cautious dissection of passages into their traditional and redactional elements provides a healthy corrective to less conservative approaches, although even his criteria are not uniformly helpful.⁷⁶ Marshall concludes:

⁷⁰ Manson, *Sayings*, 283.

⁷¹ Smith, *Parables*, 72. Cf. P. Fiebig (*Die Gleichnisreden Jesu im Lichte der rabbinischen Gleichnisse des neutestamentlichen Zeitalters* [Tubingen: Mohr, 1912] 195) who attributes all the differences to oral tradition.

⁷² Oesterley, *Parables*, 177.

⁷³ B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (London: Macmillan, 1930) 245.

⁷⁴ Rengstorf, *Lukas*, 181-83.

⁷⁵ J. Jeremias, "Tradition and Redaktion in Lukas 15," *ZNW* 62 (1971) 172-89.

⁷⁶ See his posthumously published work (J. Jeremias, *Die Sprache des Lukasevangeliums* [Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980] which analyzes all of the non-Markan portions of Luke according to carefully defined criteria (p. 8).

The differences between the Lucan and Matthaean forms are sufficiently great to make it unlikely that both Evangelists are directly dependent upon the same source. Even when allowance is made for their editorial work, we are still left with two independent versions of the parable. There is no reason why Jesus himself should not have used the same basic parable more than once and for different purposes.⁷⁷

Philip Payne has assembled a helpful chart comparing the audiences of the various parables in the Synoptics which reinforces Marshall's intuition.⁷⁸ Payne assigns each parable a number (1 through 4), standing for the claims which he believes the Gospels make concerning the setting for that parable. (1) means the setting is not even hinted at, (2) means the setting seems to be hinted at, (3) refers to settings which are implied but not explicitly stated, and (4), refers to settings explicitly stated. No doubt a fair amount of subjectivity comes into play in distinguishing categories (2) and (3), but it is remarkable that Payne can find only one parable (Luke 13:20-21) for category (1), but 31 parables (counting parallels) for category (4).

Payne then assigns all of the parables in (2), (3), and (4) a letter corresponding to the audience claimed by the evangelists for that parable — (o) for Jesus' opponents, (d) for his disciples, and (c) for the crowd in general. He gives many of the parables two letters where the Gospels' descriptions include more than one type of audience. The amazing result is that in only two instances does one Gospel contradict another by assigning a completely different audience to the same parable.⁷⁹ These two cases are the parable of the lost sheep and the parable of the pounds, where Matthew portrays Jesus exclusively addressing the disciples; and Luke, his opponents or the crowds. Yet if the Gospel writers seem so careful to preserve the correct audience in all but two cases, and if in those cases there is independent reason to believe that the parallels might not really be parallels after all, then surely

⁷⁷ Marshall, *Luke*, 600.

⁷⁸ P. B. Payne, "Metaphor as a Model for Interpretation of the Parables of Jesus with Special Reference to the Parable of the Sower" (Ph.D. Diss.: Cambridge, 1975) 239.

⁷⁹ Cf. P. S. Minear, "Jesus' Audiences, according to Luke," *NovT* 16 (1974) 81—109; A. W. Mosley, "Jesus' Audiences in the Gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke," *NTS* 10 (1963—64) 139-49; J. A. Baird, *Audience Criticism and the Historical Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969).

the most probable conclusion is that the alleged parallels are actually separate stories in which Jesus used similar themes and vocabulary more than once, although the separate traditions of these stories might have undergone slight assimilation either in their transmission or in their final redaction.

To be sure, the evidence of Jeremias' classic work on the parables seems to contradict Payne's conclusions, but in fact a careful analysis of his discussion of "the change of audience" yields a different conclusion. Jeremias only presents in detail the examples of the laborers in the vineyard (Matt 20:1-16) and the lost sheep.⁸⁰ The former is peculiar to Matthew, so tradition-historical reconstructions are entirely speculative; the latter is precisely one of Payne's two exceptions. Jeremias briefly lists further examples in defense of his claim that the evangelists regularly altered the audiences for Jesus' parables, but this list also proves deceptive. Eight of the passages he lists are not included in Payne's list of parables,⁸¹ two are peculiarly Matthean,⁸² two are peculiarly Lucan,⁸³ one is probably peculiarly Marcan,⁸⁴ three are reproduced by both Matthew and Luke without any change of address and cannot be included in the list even by conjecture,⁸⁵ and seven of the parables are merely Luke's parallels to the Matthean passages Jeremias has already included earlier in his list, thus making the number of examples supporting his point seem rather greater than it really is.⁸⁶ Moreover, of the eight passages which Payne did not examine, none reveals contradictions in audience in their parallels.⁸⁷ The end result is that Jeremias has no further examples to support his case at all. Payne concludes concerning Jeremias' approach: "often the misrepresentation to which he refers is not

⁸⁰ Jeremias, *Parables*, 33-42.

⁸¹ Mark 9:50; Matt 5:25-26; 6:22-23, 27; 7:3-5, 13-14, 16-18; Luke 6:39.

⁸² Matt 13:47-48; 25:1-13.

⁸³ Luke 16:1-7; 17:7-10.

⁸⁴ Mark 13:33-37; cf. Luke 12:35-38 and pp. 83-85 above.

⁸⁵ Matt 7:7-11; 24:43-44, 45-51.

⁸⁶ Luke 6:41-42; 11:11-13; 12:25, 35-38, 39-40, 41-48; 13:23-24.

⁸⁷ Cf. the refs. in n. Si above, respectively, with Matt 5:13; Luke 17:57-59; 11:34-36; 12:25; 6:41-42; 13:23-24; 6:43-45; Matt 15:14. Using Payne's abbreviations, the audiences for the eight pairs of passages are c/c and d; c and d/c; c and d/d; c and d/c and d; c and d/c and d; c and d/a; d/d.

actually stated in the texts in question and may not have been intended by the evangelists. The misrepresentations to which he refers are often based on an inference which would be valid in a scientific chronological biography but may be inappropriate in the Gospels."⁸⁸

One final feature confirms the independence of the two versions of the lost sheep (and of four out of five of the other pairs of parables so far discussed). I have elsewhere argued that the core of Luke's central section is made up of a collection of parables which, when isolated from their surrounding material, form an extended chiasmus in a way which suggests that Luke acquired them from a very early source not utilized by the other evangelists. Since most of the parables in this chiasmus are peculiarly Lucan, it is likely that they all are, and that they reflect a source independent of the other Gospel strata. Significantly, the parables in question are precisely those surveyed above (except for the parable of the pounds).⁸⁹

VI. The Two Builders (Luke 6:47—49; Matt 7:24—27)

Judging only from the statistics, this last pair of texts seems to belong with the other five pairs of parables not genuinely parallel. The percentages of parallelism are much closer to those for parables like the lost sheep and pounds/talents than to those for the eight above it on the chart. It could well be that these two versions reflect independent traditions;⁹⁰ much depends on one's assessment of the overall relationship between Matthew's sermon on the mount and Luke's sermon on the plain.⁹¹ But since both evangelists place the parable at the conclusion of what is at

⁸⁸ Payne, "Metaphor," 26.

⁸⁹ See Blomberg, "Midrash," 240-48.

⁹⁰ So Marshall, *Luke*, 274; B. S. Easton, *The Gospel according to St. Luke* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1926) 94.

⁹¹ Marshall (*Luke*, 245) admits frankly: "the question of the sources and pre-history of the Sermon defies solution." Cf. his subsequent survey of the alternatives. The striking difference between Luke 6:17 and Matt 5:1 is best solved by observing that Jesus was already on the mountain in Luke 6:12, so that the level place (*topos pedinos*) of v 17 is probably still in the hills. The recourse of G. L. Archer (*Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* [Grand Rapids: Zonder'van, 1982] 366) to two entirely different messages seems unnecessary.

the core the same basic sermon of Jesus, it seems hard to believe in this instance that the writers had two distinct settings in mind.

The greater percentage of verbal difference stems for the most part from the changes in imagery. Matthew apparently envisages a Palestinian wadi — a waterless ravine with steep sides which occasionally turned into a raging river after severe rains. Luke, on the other hand, portrays a broad river like the Orontes at Syrian Antioch where temporary summer shelters had to be abandoned before the winter rains set in.⁹² Most concur that Luke's parable reflects representational changes due to his writing for a non-Palestinian audience. The emphasis on building a foundation for the house likely further reflects Hellenistic influence.⁹³ These changes are striking and show the freedom with which the early church could treat the *ipsissima verba Jesu*, but they do not materially differ from what some modern Bible paraphrases practice (cf. the "flashlight" of Ps 119:105 or the "shake hands" of Rom 16:16 in the *Living Bible Paraphrased*)⁹⁴ and nevertheless preserve the original meaning of the parable intact. To claim that Luke changed the point of the parable "from one of choice of a site to digging deep to lay a foundation"⁹⁵ overlooks the fact that both evangelists stress that the wise person's house is built *epi ten petran*. Luke "merely gives the figure in a more complete form."⁹⁶ C. W. F. Smith concludes that Matthew exhorts one to build on Jesus' teaching rather than on another's, while Luke encourages one to build on the hearing of Jesus' word with the proper response.⁹⁷ Yet surely part of the proper response is not to accept any teaching which differs from Jesus', so it is hard to see how these conclusions can contradict each other.

The same is true with the slight variety between the house falling and shaking (Matt 6:25/Luke 6:48), or falling and being ruined (Matt 6:27/Luke 6:49). *Rhegma* no doubt reflects Luke's

⁹² Findlay, *Parables*, 95-96; J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke* (1-IX) (AB 28; Garden City: Doubleday, 1981) 644.

⁹³ Jeremias, *Parables*, 27 nn. 9, 11.

⁹⁴ The *Good News Bible* employs this method regularly, though generally less dramatically. See S. Kubo and W. Specht, *So Many Versions?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975) 143-44; E. A. Nida, *Good News for Everyone* (Waco: Word, 1977) 63-71.

⁹⁵ Smith, *Parables*, 189. Cf. Manson, *Sayings*, 61.

⁹⁶ Geldenhuys, *Luke*, 218 n. 22. Cf. Ernst, *Lukas*, 236.

⁹⁷ Smith, *Parables*, 190.

proserexen in v 48, while *ischysen saleusai auten* again heightens the contrast. This expression may be original, though, for it is not demonstrably Lucan;⁹⁸ and if a house cannot be shaken, then obviously, as in Matthew, it cannot fall. In any event, Wrege's conclusions seem sound. No theological differences appear in Luke's parable, and the differences in imagery represent "verschiedene Schwerpunkte im Anschauungsmaterial, die den Inhalt der Aussage nicht verändern."⁹⁹ Or as Caird puts it, "the meaning is the same in each case. The man who hears and does is safe against every crisis, while the man who only hears is inviting disaster."¹⁰⁰

Of the six Lucan parables examined, five have counterparts in either Matthew or Mark which resemble them at times in striking fashion, but which are best viewed not as true parallels at either the literary or historical level. Rather, Jesus most likely followed the practice of every good teacher and utilized similar themes and imagery in different ways on different occasions to make somewhat distinct points relevant to the differing situations. The corpus of parables in the Rabbinic literature demonstrates how commonly certain themes and characters (e.g. kings and their servants) may reappear independently in similar combinations.¹⁰¹ On the other hand, in one instance, the parables surveyed most likely reflect literary dependence by one evangelist on the other or by both on a common source, despite greater divergence than is otherwise customary. While there is no reason to assume that Jesus did not repeat this parable of the two builders as well, there is no indication in the texts themselves that the Gospel writers intended their readers to understand them as different teachings of Jesus from different contexts, and this is a characteristic feature of the undisputed parallels.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Pace H.-T. Wrege, *Die Überlieferungsgeschichte der Bergpredigt* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1968) 155; Jeremias, *Sprache*, 150. *Ischyō* is characteristic of L, not Luke, *saleuo* does not occur often enough to be characteristic of any text (Matt 2X, Mark 1X, Luke 4X, Acts 4X, Paul 1X, Heb 3X), and the other three occurrences in Luke's Gospel are paralleled in Matthew or Mark (Luke 6:38; 7:24; 21:26).

⁹⁹ Wrege, *Bergpredigt*, 155.

¹⁰⁰ G. B. Caird, *The Gospel of St. Luke* (London: Black, 1968) 107.

¹⁰¹ For a translation and analysis of all the earliest Rabbinic parables, see Johnston, "Interpretations."

¹⁰² For a detailed comparison of the other Lucan parables and their parallels, see Blomberg, "Tradition History," 273-83, 287-98.

Since so many examples of the drastic extent to which the evangelists allegedly felt free to rewrite their sources stem from these first five pairs of parallels, a reevaluation of this "freedom" is in order. I. H. Marshall's comments, concluding a detailed study of the parable of the sower in its various forms, apply well in a much wider setting: the evangelists (or the transmitters of the tradition they inherited) "felt quite free to modify details in the wording of the story, something which modern preachers regularly do when they are recounting the parables."¹⁰³ However, a large part of this activity "can be understood as a clarification . . . to bring out its meaning more clearly for his readers." In other words, "the substance of the tradition remains unchanged even though the language has been altered."¹⁰⁴

The statistical study of the verbal parallelism between the fourteen pairs of parables produced a rather clear-cut distribution of three types of parallels — only one of which consistently turned out to reveal genuine parallels. This distribution ought to encourage one to test other sets of apparent parallels in similar statistical fashion.¹⁰⁵ If other data were similarly skewed — with some apparent parallels bunched toward one end of the percentage spectrum and others toward the other end — one would have gone a long way toward objectifying an answer to the question, "when is a parallel really a parallel?"

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¹⁰³ I. H. Marshall, "Tradition and Theology in Luke (Luke 8:5-15)," *TynBul* 20 (1969) 63.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 73-74.

¹⁰⁵ I have elsewhere tested out this method on the corpus of Rabbinic parables, specifically those attributed to Tannaim. At least 28 such parables from the Tosepta, Talmuds, and Midrashim have one or more apparent parallels elsewhere in that literature, and all but two of the pairs show over 40% exact verbal parallelism. All but seven reveal a figure of over 60%. In no instance do pairs of parables present the types of similarities and differences shared by the texts of this study which were labeled not genuinely parallel. See Blomberg, "Tradition History," 420-43.

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