

*Part Three*

*Solidarity With The People*



## The Compassionate Sage

One well-attested fact about Jesus is that he taught. All four Gospels, especially the Synoptics, speak of Jesus as a teacher (*didaskalos*).<sup>1</sup> Some have translated the word *didaskalos* as *master*, but *teacher* better conveys the meaning. According to T. W. Manson, "The two most certain facts in the gospel tradition are that Jesus taught and that He was crucified."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Considering only the noun *didaskalos*, its distribution in the NT is as follows: Mk, 12 times; Mt, 12; Lk, 17; Jn, 8; Acts, 1; Paul, 7. Within this distribution, the word refers to Jesus as follows: Mk, 12 times; Mt, 10; Lk, 14; Jn, 7. See Benedict Viviano, *Study as Worship* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978), 161. All the Synoptics refer to Jesus as teacher, and in them Jesus is *addressed* as Teacher, as follows: Mark, 10 times (Mk 4:38; 9:17, 38; 10:17, 20, 35; 12:14, 19, 32; 13:1) Matthew, 6 times (Mt 8:19; 12:38; 19:16; 22:16, 24, 36); Luke, 10 times (Lk 7:40; 8:24; 9:38, 49; 10:25; 18:18; 20:21, 28, 39; 21:7).

<sup>2</sup>T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Co., [1937] 1957), 11. Manson remains one of the authorities on the teachings of Jesus. For his discussion of the history of the Jesus tradition, the sources of Jesus' teaching, and the form of that teaching, see *ibid.*, 9-38. Another important study of Jesus' teaching is C.H. Dodd, *The Founder of Christianity* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1970), 53-79. Also the writings of Norman Perrin, esp. *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), and *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom, Symbol and Metaphor in New Testament Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976). Also see Hans Conzelmann, *Jesus*, trans. J.R. Lord, ed. John Reumann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 36-81; Joseph Fitzmyer, *A Christological Catechism, New Testament Answers* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 19-34.

Although it is recognized that Jesus taught, and that he was acknowledged as a teacher by others, it is no easy task to surface accurately "The Teaching." There is much in the Gospels that one no longer considers the *ipsissima verba* (authentic words) of Jesus: yet there is also much therein that we do consider to be authentic Jesus material. Before the Gospels as we have them were written, there existed collections of sayings of Jesus, such as the collection called Q (from the German *Quelle*, source), one of the sources of the Synoptic tradition, the source which accounts for material that Matthew and Luke have in common but which was not derived from Mark. Q material has been dated around 50 C.E. T.W. Manson's reconstruction of Q included the following material (parentheses indicate some doubt on Manson's part): Luke 3:7-9, 16, 17; 4:1-13; 6:20-49; 7:(1-6a), 6b-9 (10), 18-35; 9:57-62; 10:2, 3, 8-16, 21-24; 11:9-26 (27, 28), 29-36, (37-41), 42-52; 12:(1), 2-12, 22-34, (35-38), 39-46, (47-50), 51-59; 13:18-30, 34, 35; 14:15-24, 26, 27, (34, 35); 16:13, 16-18; 17:1-6, 22-37.<sup>3</sup> This material consists almost entirely of teaching. W.D. Davies describes it as "a kind of Christian book of Proverbs inculcating the good life."<sup>4</sup>

Norman Perrin has provided a listing of a minimum that scholarly opinion recognizes as authentic Jesus material.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Sec Manson, *The Savings of Jesus*, 15-21. A more recent listing of the Q pericopes is that of Richard A. Edwards, *A Concordance to Q* (Missoula, Montana: Society of Biblical Literature and Scholars Press, 1975), i-v. For a discussion of Q, also see W.D. Davies, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 101-8; Richard A. Edwards, *A Theology of Q: Eschatology, Prophecy, and Wisdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976); Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-TX*, Anchor Bible 28 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1981), 75-81; Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology, the Proclamation of Jesus*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 38-39; Howard Clark Kee, *Jesus in History, an Approach to the Study of the Gospels*, second edition (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), 76-120.

<sup>4</sup>Davies, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 102.

<sup>5</sup>Perrin, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom*, 41. For another listing of authentic core material, see James Breech, *The Silence of Jesus, the Authentic Voice of the Historical Man* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), who selects eight sayings and twelve parables, pp. 22, 28, 36, 39, 44, 46, 48, 53 for the eight sayings, p. 66 for the seven photodramatic parables, chaps. 8-12 for the five phonodramatic parables, pp. 225-40 for the reconstructed, original versions of this material.

1. Three kingdom sayings (Luke 11:20; 17:20-21; Matthew 11:12).
2. The Lord's Prayer in a version close to Luke 11:2-4.
3. The proverbial sayings. Mark 3:27; 3:24-26; 8:35; Luke 9:62; Mark 10: 23b, 25; Luke 9:60a; Matthew 7:13-14; Mark 10:31; 7:15; 10:15; Luke 14:11 (cf. 16:15); Matthew 5:39b-41; 5:44-48.
4. The major parables:
  - The Hid Treasure and the Pearl, Matthew 13:44-46.
  - The Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, Lost (Prodigal) Son, Luke 15:3-32.
  - The Great Supper, Matthew 22:1-14; Luke 14:16-24; Gospel of Thomas 92:10-35.
  - The Unjust Steward, Luke 16:1-9.
  - The Workers in the Vineyard, Matthew 20:1-16.
  - The Two Sons, Matthew 21:28-32.
  - The Children in the Marketplace, Matthew 11:16-19.
  - The Pharisee and the Tax Collector, Luke 18:9-14.
  - The Good Samaritan, Luke 10:29-37.
  - The Unmerciful Servant, Matthew 18:23-35.
  - The Tower Builder and King Going to War, Luke 14:28-32.
  - The Friend at Midnight, Luke 11:5-8.
  - The Unjust Judge, Luke 18:1-8.
  - The Leaven, Luke 13:20-21; Gos. Thom. 97:2-6.
  - The Mustard Seed, Mark 4:30-32; Gos. Thom. 84:26-33.
  - The Seed Growing by Itself, Mark 4:26-29; Gos. Thom. 85:15-19.
  - The Sower, Mark 4:3-8; Gos. Thom. 82:3-13.
  - The Wicked Tenants, Mark 12:1-12; Gos. Thom. 93:1-18.

There is no intention here to reduce or limit the teaching of Jesus to these, but such listings do indicate that there is a fairly extensive amount of agreed upon material which allows access to the message of Jesus the Teacher.

Jesus' teaching reflects knowledge of the Hebrew Scrip-

tures, certainly the five books of the Law, the prophetic books, and the Psalms. He taught in many different circumstances to many different kinds of people: in synagogues, outside to crowds who had gathered, in chance encounters when challenged, in arguments with Jewish scribes, within the circle of his disciples. The varied audiences and occasions gave rise to some teaching which was more spontaneous repartee (Mk 2:17), and other teaching which was more considered, elaborate, part of a story (Lk 12:24-48; 17:26-30). Jesus used images when he taught, simile and analogy, which we note especially in his parables. C.H. Dodd speaks of the parables as "the most characteristic element in the teaching of Jesus."<sup>6</sup> Jesus sometimes taught with symbolic actions, as in washing the feet of his disciples, or by calling forth a child, putting his arms around the child, and teaching his disciples to be like children (Mk 9:35-37; Mt 18:1-7; Lk 9:46-48). Jesus' teaching was not hidden or secret. Although he taught the disciples, he taught crowds of people as well. His teaching was simple and frequently addressed to the less educated.

Jesus is specifically called "rabbi" four times in Mark (9:5; 10:51; 11:21; 14:45). The question is how this term was understood at the time of Jesus. It had not yet come to mean what it would later mean in post-70 C.E. Judaism after the triumph of Pharisaism. Originally the title meant "great one," or "my great one." In the time of Jesus it commonly referred to a religious teacher, but suggested nothing more, such as formal study or the later prescribed program of study. This is not to say that Jesus was not "learned" or even "scholarly" but that he was not necessarily formally educated. The expression simply indicates that Jesus was recognized as a teacher and as one having authority.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup>C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, revised edition (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), 1. Also see T.W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus*, 32-35; Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, 78.

<sup>7</sup>There is dispute over the degree to which Jesus, as teacher, was akin to other Jewish teachers, and to what degree *rabbi* indicates a parallel with them. Martin Hengel argues against using the term "rabbi" of Jesus, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers*, trans. James Greig (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 42-50. "Jesus

In considering the teaching of Jesus, we shall consider (1) the parables, (2) the sayings, (3) Jesus' eschatological teaching, (4) Jesus' ethical teaching, (5) Jesus' teaching about discipleship, (6) Jesus' teaching concerning himself, and (7) the sapiential character of Jesus' teaching.

### *The Parables*

The word parable in biblical scholarship is used in two senses. Within the general category of what are ordinarily considered parables, there are three types or forms: the similitude, the parable proper, and the example story. The similitude and parable proper are both considered metaphors. Both are stories. The similitude, however, narrates or describes typical, everyday occurrences, such as sowing, crops, harvests, a story describing an experience familiar to almost everyone. The parable proper operates with unusual rather than ordinary situations, events which are fictitious but still true to life. The image of a woman searching for a lost coin is a similitude; the story of the prodigal son and the forgiving father is a parable proper. All parables, in the general sense, have fairly standard beginnings, a statement indicating a story is to be told (Luke 10:30; 14:16; 15:11; 16:1; 16:19; 18:2; 18:10), or a question (Luke 15:8-9), or a question asking, "With what shall we compare . . . ?" (Mark 4:30-31; Luke 13:20-21). In several instances it is difficult to classify a parable, but for most of the parables there is

was not at all like a scribe of the rabbinical stamp. Consequently to use the term 'rabbi' to give anything like a precise characterization of Jesus is extremely misleading" (42). "For reasons of clarity, therefore, we should desist altogether from the description of Jesus as a 'rabbi'" (50). Yet Hengel may be going too far in his effort to "distinguish" Jesus from the rabbis. Although Jesus was no rabbi in any technical sense, he was still a Palestinian Jewish teacher. For a critique of Hengel, see Viviano, *Study as Worship*, 13, 158-67. The NT references to Jesus as rabbi simply support further the depiction of Jesus as a teacher, one who taught, nothing more, nothing technical, nor anything less. Cf., Ferdinand Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus, Their History in Early Christianity*, trans. Harold Knight and George Ogg (London: Lutterworth Press, 1969), 73-89.

consensus: 12 similitudes, 16 or 17 parables proper, 4 example stories - 32 or 33 parables in all in the Synoptic Gospels.\$

Few topics in biblical research have evoked as much scholarly activity as that on the parables. At the end of the nineteenth century, Adolf Jülicher inaugurated a new era in parable interpretation by discarding the allegorical

§Note Perrin's comment in *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom*, 167. Crossan has convinced Perrin that the story of the good Samaritan is a parable proper and not an example story, whereas in his earlier *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, 123, Perrin considered it an example story. Madeleine Boucher, *The Parables*, New Testament Message 7 (Wilmington, Del: Michael Glazier, 1981), 154, considers it an example story.

Granted that there will be some differences in classification, Boucher, *The Parables*, 153-57, classifies them as follows (those italicized are those listed among the clearly authentic material of Jesus by Perrin).

Twelve similitudes: *The Growing Seed* (Mk 4:26-29); *The Mustard Seed* (Mk 4:30-32; Mt 13:31-32; Lk 13:18-19); *The Two Builders* (Mt 7:24-27; Lk 6:47-49); *The Leaven* (Mt 13:33; Lk 13:20-21); *The Fishnet* (Mt 13:47-50); *The Lost Sheep* (Mt 18:12-14; Lk 15:3-7); *The Faithful or Unfaithful Servant* (Mt 24:45-51; Lk 12:42-46); *The Friend at Midnight* (Lk 11:5-8); *The Tower Builder* (Lk 14:28-30); *The Warring King* (Lk 14:31-32); *The Lost Coin* (Lk 15:8-10); *The Master and the Servant* (Lk 17:7-10).

Sixteen or seventeen parables proper: *The Sower* (Mk 4:3-9, 14-20; Mt 13:3-9, 18-23; Lk 8:5-8, 11-15); *The Wicked Tenants* (Mk 12:1-11; Mt 21:33-43; Lk 20:9-18); *The Weeds and the Wheat* (Mt 13:24-30, 36-43); *The Treasure* (Mt 13:44); *The Pearl* (Mt 13:45-46); *The Unmerciful Servant* (Mt 18:23-25); *The Laborers in the Vineyard* (Mt 20:1-16); *The Two Sons* (Mt 21:28-32); *The Great Feast/ Wedding Garment* (Mt 22:2-10, 11-14; Lk 14:15-24 could be considered as one or two); *The Ten Maidens* (Mt 25:1-13); *The Talents, Pounds* (Mt 25:14-30; Lk 19:11-27); *The Two Debtors* (Lk 7:41-43); *The Barren Fig Tree* (Lk 13:6-9); *The Prodigal Son* (Lk 15:11-32); *The Unjust Steward* (Lk 16:1-8); *The Persistent Widow* (Lk 18:1-8).

Four example stories: *The Good Samaritan* (Lk 10:29-37, note Crossan and Perrin consider this a parable proper); *The Rich Fool* (Lk 12:16-21); *the Rich Man and Lazarus* (Lk 16:19-31); *The Pharisee and Tax Collector* (Lk 18:9-14). One can also note that in Mark only four parables are found, two similitudes and two parables proper.

Nine parables are found only in Matthew, one similitude and eight parables proper.

Fourteen parables are found only in Luke, five similitudes, five parables, and four example stories. Only Luke contains example stories.

Six parables can be attributed to Q, four similitudes and two parables.

There are 32 or 33 parables altogether, depending upon whether one counts the Great Feast and Wedding Garment as one or two - 12 similitudes, 16 or 17 parables proper, 4 example stories. Not all of these are necessarily authentic parables of Jesus, but the majority are.

method.<sup>9</sup> Since his time it has become customary to distinguish between parable and allegory, although it is more precise to distinguish not parable from allegory but rather two contrasting methods of interpretation, the historical and allegorical. Since Jülicher parable interpretation has moved away from the allegorical method of interpretation.<sup>10</sup>

The contributions of C.H. Dodd's *Parables of the Kingdom* (1935) included raising awareness of the close relation-

<sup>9</sup> Adolf Julicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 2 vols. (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1888-99). For a summary of Julicher's contribution, see Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, trans. S.H. Hooke, revised edition (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), 18-20; Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, 257; and *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom*, 92-97. Perrin's *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom*, 89-193, is probably the best introduction to the history of parable research from Julicher to the present.

<sup>10</sup>A word of caution is necessary with respect to the distinction between parable and allegory. Jeremias speaks precisely when he speaks of Julicher's contribution as being a discarding of "the allegorical method" or "allegorical interpretations," and when he himself discusses "allegorization" or the "allegorizing tendency" in the early Church, *The Parables of Jesus*, 18-19, 66-89. Perrin speaks less precisely when he simply uses the word allegory as equivalent of allegorical method of interpretation. Allegory, properly speaking, does not denote a literary form but a way of speaking, a figurative way, or a way of communicating or intending meaning, as he spoke in puns, or metaphors, or allegories. Puns, metaphors, and allegories are not literary forms. Parable does refer to a specific literary form. Thus it is better not to oppose parable and allegory as such, which means opposing a literary form and a way of speaking. A parable may or may not be allegorical; even if it is an allegory, however, this does not mean that one best arrives at its meaning by an allegorical method of interpretation, which is neither a literary form nor a way of speaking but a method of interpretation. Since Julicher we have realized that the "meaning" of a parable, even if it is an allegory, is not best "discovered" or "interpreted" by means of the allegorical method, or the flights of imagination to which that method is open. In other words, the parables (even those one may call allegories from a literary point of view) are better understood when interpreted historically, rather than allegorically.

Madeleine Boucher, *The Parables*, a very readable introduction to the parables, makes this point concerning parable and allegory, 25-31. Also see her *Mysterious Parable: A Literary Study* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1977).

Reading both Perrin and Boucher, one ought keep in mind that allegory is being used in two different senses: Allegory = a mode of meaning (Boucher), thus a parable can have an allegorical mode of meaning, non-literal one; and allegory = method of interpretation (Perrin), and thus a parable is better grasped if it is interpreted in its historical setting and not allegorically. Both are correct. Hence it is better to speak of parable interpretation as discarding the allegorical method of interpretation.

ship between parable interpretation and our understanding of the kingdom or reign of God; the insistence that parables had to be interpreted within the historical context of the life of Jesus, the *Sitz im Leben Jesu*; "realized eschatology," the fact that the reign of God is not a future reality but present already in the preaching and ministry of Jesus; and a literary understanding of the parable in relationship to metaphor with the result that two types of metaphor were distinguished, the similitude and parable proper. 11

Joachim Jeremias' *Parables of Jesus* (1947) was an epoch-making study which is still a starting point for further study of the parables.<sup>12</sup> Jeremias' contribution has been at the textual and historical levels. Jeremias attempted to reconstruct the parables so that we can have them in the form in which Jesus spoke them. The parables, as uttered by Jesus, have been transformed in the history of their transmission. As they have come down to us, they have two historical settings; the original historical setting within some specific situation in the life of Jesus, and subsequently, before they assumed written form, a setting in the primitive Church during which they were transformed. Jeremias gives ten specific principles of transformation in terms of which one can reconstruct or recover the original form and setting. 13

<sup>1</sup> C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (New York: Scribner's, [1935, 1936] 1961).

<sup>12</sup> Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, the second English edition, based upon the sixth German edition of 1962, first published in German in 1947 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963). Also see his *Rediscovering the Parables* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), a revision of the earlier work in order to make it less technical and more readable for a wider audience. It meets well the needs of a beginning student.

<sup>13</sup> See *The Parables of Jesus*, 23-114, for these ten principles; also *Rediscovering the Parables*, 16-88. Pp. 113-14 (or 87-88 of the latter) list them as follows:

1. The translation of the parables into Greek involved an inevitable change in their meaning.
2. For the same reason representational material is occasionally "translated."
3. Pleasure in the embellishment of the parables is noticeable at an early date.
4. Occasionally passages of Scripture and folk-story themes have influenced the shaping of the material.

Modern parable interpretation has been conscious not only of historically situating and interpreting the parables, but has also been conscious of their literary character as well. The major contribution or impetus here has come from Amos Wilder.<sup>14</sup> Uniquely competent as both a literary critic and a New Testament scholar, Wilder has influenced a new generation of American scholars.<sup>15</sup> Wilder's contribution to parable research is literary: parable in relationship to metaphor and the nature of language. Wilder distinguishes the different kinds of parables: the example story, the simili-

5. Parables which were originally addressed to opponents or to the crowd have in many cases been applied by the primitive Church to the Christian community.
6. This led to an increasing shift of emphasis to the hortatory aspect, especially from the eschatological to the hortatory.
7. The primitive Church related the parables to its own actual situation, whose chief features were the missionary motive and the delay of the Parousia; it interpreted and expanded them with these factors in view.
8. To an increasing degree the primitive Church interpreted the parables allegorically with a view of the hortatory use.
9. The primitive Church made collections of parables, and fusion of parables took place.
10. The primitive Church provided the parables with a setting, and this often produced a change in the meaning; in particular, by the addition of generalizing conclusions, many parables acquired a universal meaning.

By way of contrast to Jeremias's reconstruction of the original form of the parables, see James Breech, *The Silence of Jesus*, 65-214, 229-40.

<sup>14</sup>Amos N. Wilder, *Early Christian Rhetoric, the Language of the Gospel*, revised edition (Cambridge: Harvard U. Press, [1964] 1971).

<sup>15</sup>E.g., Robert Funk, Dan Otto Via, John Dominic Crossan. See Robert W. Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966); Dan O. Via, *The Parables: Their Literary and Existential Dimension* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967); John Dominic Crossan, *In Parables: the Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973). For a summary, see Norman Perrin, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom*, 132-168. Funk contributes further to our understanding of parable as metaphor and makes a contribution toward understanding metaphor itself. Both parable and metaphor draw the listener into them as a participant. Via presents four criticisms of an approach to the parables which is overly historical: the nature of the gospel material makes it difficult to pinpoint a *Sitz im Leben Jesu*; a severely historical approach can easily end up speaking to a past historical situation rather than to the present; the historical approach can neglect the aesthetic character of the parables. Via himself concentrates especially on two aspects of the parable, the aesthetic and the existential, two dimensions less emphasized in previous research. Crossan

tude, and the parable proper. Some parables are straight narratives which end with an application. These are example stories: go and do not do likewise, as in the story of the rich man and Lazarus. Other parables are images which reveal rather than exemplify: the similitudes and parables proper. Wilder emphasizes the revelatory character of these parables. They are metaphors, implied comparisons, in contrast to similes. They shock the imagination into realization. The simile can clarify but the metaphor reveals. The similitude is a metaphor, and the parable proper, an extended metaphor.

Jesus' parables speak of the reign of God.<sup>16</sup> The parables as metaphors function in order that the language of the kingdom, the metaphor of the kingdom, can evoke the myth of God acting as King on behalf of the people.<sup>17</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx describes the function of the parable:

The fact is, a parable turns around a "scandalizing" centre, at any rate a core of paradox and novelty. A parable often stands things on their head; it is meant to break through our conventional thinking and being. A parable is meant to start the listener thinking by means of a

distinguishes between parable and allegory on the basis of a distinction between symbol and allegory, i.e., a distinction between the inexpressible and the expressible. Parables are like symbols in trying to express the inexpressible and thus are not reducible to clear language. The kind of figurative language found in parables does not simply illustrate information but creates a participation that precedes information.

<sup>16</sup>Norman Perrin has contributed three significant works to our understanding of the reign of God, in which he brings the interpretation of the kingdom into conjunction with the history of parable interpretation. *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1963), one of the better summaries of the modern discussion on this topic; *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), an exegesis of significant texts pertinent both to the kingdom of God and to the teaching of Jesus; *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), a study of symbol and metaphor in their relationship to Jesus' teaching on the kingdom and Jesus' teaching in parables, containing critique and revision with respect to his earlier studies.

<sup>17</sup>Perrin, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom*, 33, speaks about the kingdom as a symbol, not a conception or idea. It is more correct to speak about the kingdom as a metaphor, but Perrin has drawn attention to the symbolic language with which Jesus speaks when he speaks about the reign of God.

built-in element of the "surprising" and the "alienating" in a common, everyday event. It is not every night that one is hauled out of bed to help a needy stranger in dire straits; and you are not continually losing a sheep or a coin. It never happens at all to a good many of us. And yet in the parable I am confronted with it, here and now. The parable obliges me to go on thinking about it. Parables are "teasers." The familiar event is set against an unfamiliar background, and in that way what is commonplace becomes a stimulating challenge. It gives us a jolt.<sup>18</sup>

C.H. Dodd's definition of the parable still remains unsurpassed: "The parable is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought."<sup>19</sup> The parables reveal Jesus as a master storyteller, and our study of the content of the parables reveals something to which we concluded earlier in our search for the self-understanding of Jesus: the parables are not about himself, but about God.

One of the most striking characteristics of Jesus' core sayings and parables is that he remained basically silent about himself. Only two of the core sayings make any reference to Jesus, the saying that states he came eating and drinking, and the one that indicates he liberated persons from the demonic. Nor did Jesus tell stories about himself. In that respect, he is the opposite of most contemporary storytellers who say, "An interesting thing *happened to me* on the way to . . . ." Jesus does not organize his experience in the re-active mode, in terms of what happens *to* him. Rather, the perspective that comes

<sup>18</sup>Schillebeeckx, *Jesus, an Experiment in Christology*, trans. Hubert Hoskins (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 156-7.

<sup>19</sup>C.H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, 5. This definition is also the starting point for Robert Funk. See the chapter, "The Parable as Metaphor," in his *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God*. For Boucher's definition, see *The Parables*, 14-17.

through in all of his parables is that of someone who is intensely observant of what happens in human life, quite apart from any reference to his own ego.<sup>20</sup>

The word parable in Greek, *parabole* (Hebrew, *mashal*) was not restricted historically or biblically as it is today. It referred to various forms of figurative speech. The New Testament uses *parabole* when speaking of a comparison (Mk 3:23; 13:28-29; Lk 5:36), a proverb (Lk 4:23; 6:39), a wisdom saying (Mk 7:15), a riddle (Mk 7:17), a symbol (Heb 9:9; 11:19), as well as the examples, similitudes, and parables proper to which we apply the expression.

### *The Sayings of Jesus*

In addition to the parables through which we have access to the teaching of the earthly Jesus, we also have a tradition of Jesus' sayings from which the Gospel writers later drew. Individual sayings of Jesus as well as collections were handed down orally but reliably.<sup>21</sup> Some of these may have been isolated sayings or proverbs which were remembered and later found their place in the Gospels. Some may have been gathered together early for catechetical purposes and formed into a collection which the evangelists could take over either in whole or in part. Some are sayings which have not been incorporated into the canonical writings. Luke 11:14-26 is an example of a collection of sayings within his Gospel. Whether or not it existed as a collection before Luke or was formulated by Luke we do not know. Verses 17-20 are a collection which provide a response to the charge that Jesus casts our devils by diabolical power. Verses 21-26 - other sayings concerning possession and exorcism - get "tagged on" by way of association.

<sup>20</sup>James Breech, *The Silence of Jesus*, 217. See 213-22.

<sup>21</sup>For some discussion of the Jesus tradition prior to the written Gospels, see T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus*, 11-15; Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 1-37; and Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1964), and *Tradition and Transmission in Early Christianity* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1964).

Not all the sayings attributed to Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels are authentic sayings of Jesus (*ipsissima verba Jesu*). The tendency to distinguish between Jesus (in history) and the Christ (Jesus as raised from the dead and proclaimed by the Church) is modern. Early Christian communities did not so distinguish but identified the Risen Lord with Jesus. Nevertheless, scholars have been able to identify some sayings as clearly pre-resurrection utterances of Jesus.

Within the material that scholars ordinarily recognize as authentic Jesus material, even from a minimalist point of view, in addition to the "Our Father" and the majority of the parables, are a number of sayings of Jesus. Perrin includes the three sayings concerning the kingdom (Lk 11:20; 17:20-21; Mt 11:12) as well as fourteen proverbial sayings (Mk 3:24-26; 3:27; 7:15; 8:35; 10:15; 10:23b; 10:31; Lk 9:60a; 9:62; 10:15; 14:11; Mt 5:39b-41; 5:44-48; 7:13-14):<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the authentic sayings of Jesus which we find woven into the Gospels, there are also sayings of Jesus which have not been recorded in the four Gospels, the "agrapha" or so-called unwritten sayings of Jesus.<sup>23</sup> Research into this particular Jesus material dates only from 1889 and was stimulated by the discovery of the Oxyrhynchus papyri and especially the Coptic Gospel of Thomas. The Gospel of Thomas includes the parable of the great fish which is recognized by some as an authentic parable of Jesus and considered by John Dominic Crossan as one of three key parables.<sup>24</sup> The majority of the agrapha are not authentic sayings of Jesus however.

<sup>22</sup>Perrin, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom*, 41. Keep in mind that this is a minimum. One ought not quickly identify the teaching of Jesus or even the authentic sayings of Jesus with lists such as these. The sayings simply exemplify the proverbial teaching of Jesus and represent a case for which there is some consensus. I am not suggesting that the *ipsissima verba Jesu* be reduced to these.

<sup>23</sup>Joachim Jeremias, *Unknown Sayings of Jesus* (London: SPCK, 1964), for a discussion of the sources for the agrapha, the varied types of material that they comprise, and the eighteen which Jeremias considers as deserving of attention. Also see *The Gospel According to Thomas, Coptic Text Established and Translated*, by A. Guillaumont, Puech, et al. (New York: Harper and Row, 1959).

<sup>24</sup>John Dominic Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 34.

A good example of the proverbial type sayings of Jesus are the beatitudes.<sup>25</sup> They are found in both Matthew and Luke. Luke includes four beatitudes (6:20-23) and four corresponding woes or curses (6:24-26), which woes are more likely Lucan additions. Matthew has nine beatitudes (5:3-11). The specific verses from Q are Luke 20b-23 (/ / Mt 5:3, 4, 6, 11-12), four beatitudes which are authentic Jesus material. The other five beatitudes of Matthew are Matthean additions (the meek, the merciful, the pure of heart, the peacemakers, the persecuted for righteousness sake). The four beatitudes which can assuredly be considered as coming from Jesus are:

Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.  
 Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh.  
 Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you or revile you, and cast out your name as evil, on account of the son of humanity! (Lk 6:20-22)

Of these four beatitudes, the first three form one unit, as the parallelism indicates. Manson writes, "The fourth beatitude should almost certainly be assigned to a late date in the ministry. It differs in tone from the other three."<sup>26</sup> Each of the beatitudes may have been uttered at different times and the first three joined together later, but prior to Q. Or the first three may have been uttered as a unit by Jesus and preserved together with the fourth being joined to them later. These are not the only beatitudes of Jesus or at least

<sup>25</sup>For bibliography pertinent to the beatitudes, one can see any major commentary on Matthew 5 or Luke 6, particularly Joseph Fitzmyer, *Luke, I-IX*, 645-46; and F. W. Beare, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), 125-38. Also see the bibliography in Fitzmyer, *Luke, I-IX*, 645-46. Helpful material can also be found in Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 109-13, 141-51; T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus*, 46-49, 150-64; Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 172-79. An excellent specialized study is Jacques Dupont, *Les beatitudes*, 3 vols. (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1958, 1969, 1973). For the secondary character of the Lucan woes, see Dupont, vol. 1, 299-342; Fitzmyer, *Luke, I-IX*, 627.

<sup>26</sup>Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus*, 47.

not the only ones attributed to him (see Lk 1:45; 7:23;10:23; 11:27-28; 12:37, 38, 43; 14:14-15; 23:29).

Since we do not know the actual setting in the life of Jesus when the beatitudes may have been uttered, it is difficult to know the audience to whom they were addressed. Matthew suggests the presence of a crowd but also implies that Jesus may have been speaking more directly to the disciples (Mt 5:1-2). Luke presents Jesus speaking to the disciples (Lk 6:20); yet the crowd is in the background (6:19) and Jesus seems to include them (6:27). There is not sufficient reason to conclude that Jesus was thinking only of his disciples as he spoke. Let us look at the four beatitudes of Jesus which come from Q.

"Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (6:20). Matthew's version runs, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (5:3). The Gospel of Thomas also contains the beatitude, "Blessed are the poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven" (54). There is dispute about whether the Lucan second person or the Matthean third person is more authentic.<sup>27</sup> The Lucan "poor" is more original than the Matthean "poor in spirit" which represents interpretation and generalization. The Gospel of Thomas is closer to Luke, although it reflects the Matthean "kingdom of heaven" in contrast to the Lucan "kingdom of God."

Who are the poor? We cannot be too definitive in responding.<sup>21</sup> The reference is not exclusively to the economically poor, but to the needy, both the socially ostracized and economically disadvantaged. We ought not interpret the expression too spiritually, as Matthew's interpretation may tempt us to do. It was used by Jesus to refer to the actual and concrete poor as well as to social outcasts. Luke's version, the more original, is frank in that respect.

<sup>27</sup>T. W. Manson opts for the second person, *The Sayings of Jesus*, 47.

<sup>28</sup>For particularly good discussions of the poor, see Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 108-13; and Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 172-78. Also see Bruce J. Molina, *The New Testament World, Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 71-93.

Luke has in mind the poor in contrast to the rich. The corresponding woe makes this clear ("Woe to you that are rich," 6:24). Yet the woe is not original as the beatitude is. So while it helps us to understand Luke's interpretation in contrast to Matthew's, it does not help us understand Jesus. Yet, if we look at the next two beatitudes, those who hunger and those who weep, we do see how Jesus spoke to those who were actually, physically, humanly needy.

It is helpful to imagine the concrete group which Jesus addressed. Both the texts of Matthew and Luke make particular references to the disciples. In the prayer which Jesus taught his disciples, he taught them to pray for bread. Many had left everything to follow him. Poverty, hunger, sadness, and ostracism must have affected his disciples in different ways at different times. Yet, in spite of these conditions and the cost of discipleship, Jesus considered them fortunate. In addition, Jesus spoke to the crowds who so often followed him. They were composed of publicans, sinners, the uneducated and backward, the socially disreputable, the sick, those possessed by demons, children, women. They were living in economic poverty as well as without status in society. To these "poor" Jesus had come to proclaim the good news of the reign of God.

Luke interprets Jesus as having taken as a mandate from the Lord the text of the prophet Isaiah (Lk 4:18-19).

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,  
 because the Lord has anointed me  
 to bring good tidings to the afflicted;  
 he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
 to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
 and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;  
 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,  
 and the day of vengeance of our God;  
 to comfort all who mourn;  
 to grant to those who mourn in Zion-  
 to give them a garland instead of ashes,  
 the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
 the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit;

that they may be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified. (Is  
61:1-3)

Commentators generally recognize Isaiah 61:1-3 as lying behind Luke's first beatitude, and hence as lying behind the teaching of Jesus as well. Whether or not Jesus actually inaugurated his mission by reference to the text from Isaiah, the text is still reflected in the teaching of Jesus. This same Isaian text is the key text reflecting prophetic/ Isaian amplification of the Jubilee proclamation and thus of a Jubilee motif in the teaching of Jesus as well.<sup>29</sup> The beatitudes reflect Jesus' sense of mission. "The poor" is being used in a sense wider than the economically poor, including existential and social need. Jesus addressed both the outcasts of society and also his disciples who were more and more being identified in their solidarity with the poor. Grant the reality, yet fortunate are these poor. The reign of God is theirs. What appeared as a paradox was in fact an eschatological reversal to be expected in the course of history. The closer God's reign, the less the prevailing set of values would hold. Jesus emerged again as a prophet of hope and compassion whose heart and message reached out to the people. Jesus was for others, for the poor.

"Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied" (Luke 6:21a). Matthew's version: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (5:6). The Gospel of Thomas: "Blessed are the hungry, for the belly of him who desires shall be filled" (69).

Again, the beatitude looks toward those immediately and urgently in need. Satisfaction, a reversal of the course of

<sup>29</sup>The most recent, thorough study of this Jubilee motif in the teaching of Jesus is Sharon Hilda Ringe's *Jubilee Proclamation in the Ministry and Teaching of Jesus: A Tradition - Critical Study in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, 1981), a doctoral dissertation. Pp. 180-88 for a consideration of the beatitudes. Ringe concludes that Jubilee themes are present in the teaching of Jesus, although there is no evidence that Jesus consciously presented a Jubilee program as part of his mission. Jesus' message was *in fact* but not necessarily *in intent* a Jubilee message.

events, is not far off. The hungry shall not go hungry much longer. The expression "reign of God" is found only in the first beatitude, yet there persists the eschatological character of the blessings. This one is reminiscent of the theme of the eschatological banquet (Is 25:6-8; 49:10-13; Ps 107:1-9; Lk 12:37; 13:29; 14:14-15, 16-24).

"Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh" (Luke 6:21b). Matthew: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (5:4). It is difficult to say which version may be more original. The saying carries with it the flavor of those who mourn social oppression - the sadness of the poor and the hungry, as well as the sorrow over the pains of discipleship and the rejection which accompanies it, and grief for whatever cause. As in the second beatitude, the verb is future. Yet the words are "shall laugh shortly." The reversal is close at hand; there is reason for hope. The reversal is not associated with future life but with the coming reign of God here on earth.

The reversal here anticipates days of laughter or comfort. Both are plausible originals and have particular meaning. The weeping and laughter is reminiscent of the captives of Babylon.

By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept,  
when we remembered Zion. (Psalm 137:1)

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were  
like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with  
laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they  
said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things  
for them." The Lord has done great things for us; we are  
glad. Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like the watercourses  
in the Negeb. (Psalm 126:1-4)

Jewish history knew how the course of events could be reversed, and such a reversal was again anticipated in the teaching of Jesus. Those who are weeping shall soon laugh.

Joy is obviously a sign of the presence of God. We can call to mind the comfort for the exiles anticipated by Deutero-Isaiah (61:2). This joy as a sign of the reign of God leads Schillebeeckx to comment, "Laughter, not crying, is the deepest purpose that God wills for humanity. That means therefore that he does not in any case will suffering. On no account is Jesus prepared to shift suffering and evil on to God."<sup>30</sup> God wills laughter, and is a God of joy.

As one looks at the three beatitudes that Jesus would have spoken to the crowd, one finds in them both a reflection of his image of God and his desire to express a word of consolation to the people. Evidently, when God reigns on earth, our stomachs will be full and there will be laughter and joy. Only the first beatitude is expressed as "the reign of God is yours." Yet the next two imply that same reign, and when God rules on earth there will be neither hunger nor tears. Jesus' God is one who will banish both.

The expression *reign of God* is best interpreted as a Jewish (targumic) circumlocutional way of speaking. The Greek expressions *he basileia tou theou* and *he basileia tou ouranou* (in Hebrew *malkut shamayim*) are better translated as reign of God and reign of heaven than as kingdom of God. The latter connotes more easily a territory ruled whereas the emphasis is on God, but on God as reigning or present. In Jesus' usage, the expression does not carry the apocalyptic sense of a catastrophic cosmic event, but is rather Jesus' way of speaking, rooted in the metaphor of God as king. It is a characteristic way of speaking for Jesus (*ipsissima vox*), a circumlocutional or reverent way of speaking about God, connoting God as near, present, or coming. The most direct sense of the expression can sometimes be gained simply by using the word God. "Reign of God" was not an apocalyptic or eschatological concept; it was *a way of speaking about God*. The reign of God is God.

<sup>30</sup>Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 178. Also see Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching*, 87-90.

This usage is not peculiar to Jesus but reflects targumic usage as well.<sup>31</sup>

The targums (Aramaic paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible necessitated by the inability of many Jews to understand the Hebrew) on the prophets show close parallels to Jesus' usage. For example, the Hebrew text of Zechariah 14:9a, "And the Lord will become king over all the earth," is translated or paraphrased in the Zechariah Targum as "and the kingdom of the Lord will be revealed upon all the dwellers of the earth." In the Isaiah Targum, the proclamation "Behold your God!" (Is 40:9) is translated as "the reign of your God is revealed"; and "Your God reigns" (Is 52:7) as "the reign of your God is revealed."<sup>32</sup> As we can see, the kingdom or reign is God. Jesus' usage parallels that of the Isaiah Targum, a way of speaking about God.

Understanding Jesus' usage properly makes outmoded many of the discussions about whether the kingdom was present or future in the teaching of Jesus, for God is, both here and coming. God cannot be confined within temporal categories.

As to the question whether Jesus himself would have used the expression as we have it in Mark and Luke (the reign of God) or as we have it in Matthew (the reign of heaven), Rudolf Schnackenburg suggests that it was probably Matthew who altered the expression for his Jewish Christian community.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, Gustav Dalman suggested that Mark and Luke avoided the characteristically Jewish

<sup>31</sup> See especially Bruce David Chilton, "Regnum Dei Deus Est," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 31 (1978), 261-70; *God in Strength: Jesus' Announcement of the Kingdom* (Linz: Plochl, 1979), 277-98. Also Bruce Chilton, ed., *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus. Issues in Religion and Theology*, 5 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), esp. 22-26, 121-32. Also see Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, 21-29. Valuable discussions pertinent to the history of the interpretation of the kingdom include G. Lundstrom, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus: A History of Interpretation from the Last Decades of the Nineteenth Century to the Present Day* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1963); Norman Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus*; and Jacques Schlosser, *Le Regne de Dieu dans les dits de Jesus*, 2 vols. (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1980).

<sup>32</sup> Chilton, "Regnum Dei Deus Est," 264-67.

<sup>33</sup> Rudolf Schnackenburg, *God's Rule and Kingdom*, trans. John Murray (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), 80.

expression (reign of heaven) out of regard for their Gentile audiences.<sup>34</sup> It may be a difficult question to decide, but again targumic references would suggest reign of God as the expression more likely for Jesus to use.<sup>35</sup>

In the Hebrew Scriptures, it is God's name or glory which dwells with the people, never God Himself. So with respect to Jesus' use of the language of the kingdom, it is God-talk. Jesus is saying: Blessed are you, for God is yours.

We can picture the crowds composed of the poor, the hungry, the sad, the sick, the lame, the outcasts, the uneducated, the unclean. What could Jesus say to them that might have been a word of consolation? Nothing would have taken away their poverty, their sadness; no words were going to feed or clothe them. Yet the heart of the compassionate Jesus reached out to them. What could he have said? He knew how his heavenly Father's love reached out to them as well. And so he said all that he could say: God is yours. The message did not remove the poverty or hunger or pain. And yet it was a word of consolation. And it expressed one of the fundamental religious insights in the teaching of Jesus: GOD BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE. Nothing can separate them from God's love. They may fall outside the realm of the Law or social acceptability but they do not fall outside the realm of God. God belongs to *them*.

The first three beatitudes form a unit. The fourth may well have come from another point in the ministry of Jesus and may reflect a consciousness on the part of Jesus of his own anticipated fate, of the growing divisiveness that his ministry was causing, of the rejection which accompanied the prophets of old, and the ostracization which was "outlawing" his most ardent disciples and leading to their being identified with "the poor." The fourth beatitude seems to have had his disciples particularly in mind.

"Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, on account of the son of humanity! Rejoice in that day, and

<sup>34</sup>Gustaf Dalman, *The Words of Jesus* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), 93, also see 189.

<sup>35</sup>Chilton, "Regnum Dei Deus Est," 264.

leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets" (Lk 6:22-23). Matthew: "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so people persecuted the prophets who were before you" (5:11-12). The Gospel of Thomas: "Blessed are you when you are hated and persecuted, and no place shall be found there where you have been persecuted. . . Blessed are they who have been persecuted in their heart; these are they who have known the Father in truth" (68, 69a).

In the first beatitude, (the reign of) God was present at hand; the verb is present tense. In the second and third beatitudes, the verbs are future. The anticipated reversal was still to come but eagerly anticipated. The fact, however, that the full strength of God was not immediately present was reflected in this fourth beatitude. A time of persecution was still to come before the reversal. The disciples were to be ready for opposition and rejection. Luke mentions four elements of the rejection to come: hatred, ostracization, discrimination, and vilification of one's name. Matthew mentions three: discrimination, persecution, false and evil lies. All this is to be endured for Jesus' sake.

The opposition and rejection were not to be feared, however, but are in fact cause for joy. Manson writes, "It is a proof that those who endure it stand in the succession of the great servants of God in past ages, who received like treatment in their day. Moreover, it is only for a time. The fulfillment of God's purpose is sure, and in that consummation God's servants will find their reward with joy."<sup>36</sup> Obviously, Jesus saw his disciples as also having to play a prophetic role like unto his own.

Having examined these four sayings of Jesus, we can make four observations about the teaching of Jesus as a whole. (1) Jesus' consciousness and teaching reflected an eschatological awareness. This is manifest in the prayer

<sup>36</sup>Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus*, 48.

Jesus taught his disciples, in the parables, in the particular kingdom sayings as well as in the eschatological consciousness reflected in the beatitudes. (2) Jesus' love for the poor and the outcast was reflected in the special place they occupy in his ministry. The prophets of old spoke out against injustice. He came to preach good news to the downtrodden. He healed the sick. He was conscious of the hungry even in his prayer. His teaching reflected an ethic of love of neighbor. This ethical concern is reflected in the beatitudes as is Jesus' eschatological awareness. (3) Jesus was also clearly teaching his disciples about discipleship, both its joy and its pain. (4) We must be careful not to read more into these four sayings, but we can note that Jesus said something about himself as well, about his own experience, fear, hunger, rejection, hope, joy, as well as the fate which lay ahead. These four "areas" fairly well represent the concerns of the Teacher.

### *The Eschatological Teaching of Jesus*

The reign of God was central to the consciousness, ministry, preaching and teaching of Jesus. His heavenly Father's closeness formed the horizon within which Jesus lived and preached. There is no denying the centrality of God's reign as the prominent element in the authentic sayings of Jesus, in the parables, in the beatitudes, and in the prayer he taught.

The reign of God was primarily a way of speaking, one of Jesus' ways of speaking about God, about God in relationship to humankind, a circumlocutional, periphrastic way of speaking.<sup>37</sup> In the end, the reign of God is God, God as near, or as coming in strength, or as ruling, but still God. Talk about the reign of heaven or reign of God was simply Jesus' way of talking about God; but God in relationship to us, God under the aspect of his power, God as active in our

<sup>37</sup>See n. 31 of this chapter.

history, God as reigning on earth as in heaven - the Israelite notion of the Lord as King. The reign of God does not denote a kingdom of God as much as the sovereignty of a God who is acting in history on our behalf. The earth is subject to the sovereignty of God, the reign of God. Thy kingdom come: may thy reign come even more completely, may Thy power manifest itself and may it rule on earth, may Thy sovereignty be recognized and acknowledged on earth and Thy name held holy. God's reign is his rule, his power, his presence, his glory; it is *God as present* to his people.

In the time of Jesus, however, for many, the activity and power and presence of God was especially associated with the future, with the eschatological times, with the Day of the Lord. Thus (the reign of) God, for Jesus, was still to come. The reign of God not only evoked the image of God acting sovereignly on behalf of the people but that sovereignty as it would soon be established on earth. The reign was envisioned as an eschatological reign, the coming times when God would rule as sovereign on earth.

Three sayings in particular help us understand Jesus' teaching on the reign of God.

1. But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.  
(Luke 11:20)

This saying comes from Q, has its parallel in Matthew 12:28, and is an authentic saying of Jesus. The Lucan form is the more original. The saying is an interpretation by Jesus of his exorcisms based on Exodus 8:15-19, which discloses Jesus' view that the reign of God, namely, God, was already present and manifest, at least in Jesus and his ministry, and in particular in the exorcisms. It was by the power of God that Jesus cast out demons; the exorcisms were a manifestation of God's power. This power was active and present in the ministry of Jesus; thus (the power and reign of) God had come. Another aspect of this reign is that it was a victory over the power and reign of the Evil One. The exorcisms

show the power of God subduing the forces of evil. Jesus was the one through whom (the power and reign of) God was revealed.

2. Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say 'Lo, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."(Luke 17:20-21)

This saying of Jesus shows his rejection of a completely or thoroughly apocalyptic understanding of the reign of God; it was not to be accompanied by signs (in fact, the only sign to be given was the sign of Jonah, as stated in Mt 12:39;16:4; Lk 11:29-32).<sup>38</sup> This is a clear statement not only of Jesus' refusal to give signs, but of his own teaching that one will not detect the coming of (the reign of) God by means of signs. Other Synoptic passages witness to this refusal on the part of Jesus: Matthew 12:39; 16:4; Luke 11:29-32; and Mark 8:11-13.

The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven, to test him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation. (Mark 8:11-12)

<sup>38</sup>Concerning the authenticity of this saying, see Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching Of Jesus*, 68-74; *Jesus and the Language Of the Kingdom*, 41. See also Richard Edwards, *The Sign Of Jonah in the Theology Of the Evangelists and Q* (London: SCM Press, 1971). I argued earlier that Jesus was no apocalypticist, certainly no typical apocalypticist, not denying of course some apocalyptic features. James D.G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament, an Inquiry into the Character Of Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), 318-22, suggests that there is an apocalyptic character to Jesus' eschatology, although in important respects he differs from apocalypticism as well. Jesus' rejection of historical determinism and accompanying signs is one non-apocalyptic feature. Also see Robert Jewett, *Jesus Against the Rapture, Seven Unexpected Prophecies* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979).

Whatever the full meaning of the signs Jesus refused to give, the sayings indicate that Jesus was not a typical apocalyptic seer.

The apocalyptic understanding of history is presupposed in searching for signs of the end or calculating its coming, and in rejecting this approach in Luke 17:20f. Jesus is rejecting the understanding of history which it presupposes. The coming of the Kingdom cannot be calculated in advance, nor will it be accompanied by signs such as apocalyptic sought, because the Kingdom is the sovereign power of God breaking into history and human experience in a manner to be determined by God; it is not history moving inevitably to a climax predetermined in accordance with a divine plan to which apocalyptic seers have had access. In effect, we have in this saying a rejection of the apocalyptic understanding of history and a return to the prophetic understanding.<sup>39</sup>

The translation of *entos humon* in Luke 17:21 has been much discussed, as to whether it is better translated as "within you" or "among you." Most exegetes today accept "among you" as more accurate. The question cannot be decided on linguistic grounds alone. Manson raised two considerations in support of "among you."<sup>40</sup> (1) The Pharisees were being addressed. Would Jesus have referred to the reign of God as being within them? (2) Jesus ordinarily spoke of people entering the reign of God, not the reign entering them. That people enter into it implies that it was in their midst and they could partake of it, participate in it.

3. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. (Mt 11:12)

<sup>39</sup>Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1963), 177-78, also 174-78; *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, 72-73; *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom*, 46.

<sup>40</sup>Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus*, 303-5.

The law and the prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and every one enters it violently. (Lk 16:16)

Matthew's version is accepted by many scholars as closer to the original, although it is difficult to interpret. It suggests the idea that the reign of heaven had begun, indeed began with the ministry and mission of John, but that the reign still endured or suffered violence, and it was evidently not yet fully established. The saying also manifests both present and future aspects of the reign.

The tendency of the early Church was to denigrate the role of John and to consider him a forerunner of Jesus (Mk 9:11-13; Mt 11:14). That tendency does not exist in this saying which reflects a high regard for John and probably reflects the authentic attitude and teaching of Jesus (as do Mt 21:32; Mk 11:27-30). John is seen as present in the new age and is included within it. John marked the shift to a new era in history. Luke's version, which may reflect Lucan editing, makes this point even clearer, but the reality is in the Matthean version as well. From the time of John, (the reign of) God has been with us. Manson comments on the Lucan version thus: "The saying contrasts two periods in history: the period of the Law and prophets and the period of the Kingdom of God. The former is one of promise, the latter of fulfillment; and the ministry of the Baptist is the dividing line between the two."<sup>41</sup> In fact, the Baptist is on this side of the dividing line.

But, although the reign of God has been manifesting itself since the days of John, it still suffers violence (*biazetai*). *Biazetai* can be taken in two senses, as a passive or as a middle voice. As a middle voice, it would mean that it exercises force, shows its power, and thus means that since the time of John the reign of heaven has exercised power, the evidence for which one finds in both John and Jesus. If a passive, *biazetai* has more the sense in the translation

quoted: it suffers, endures violence. This translation would reflect the continuing assault against it by the reign of Satan which has not yet been overcome once and for all. It could well reflect the violent death of John himself, and the violence in store for Jesus and his disciples. This sense goes well with the latter portion of the verse; the violent and violence still snatch at or attack the reign of God which is not yet firmly established on earth in all its sovereignty.

There are eight points to make about Jesus' understanding of (the reign of) God.

1. (*The reign of) God is already here.* Whatever it was that Jesus perceived and which he proclaimed or whatever it was by which he had been grasped, it was already active and present. This aspect of the reign of God is apparent in the authentic sayings of Jesus as well as in many of the parables. C. H. Dodd's *Parables of the Kingdom* (1935) was the major exposition of realized eschatology.

Whatever we make of them, the sayings which declare the Kingdom of God to have come are explicit and unequivocal. They are moreover the most characteristic and distinctive of the Gospel sayings on the subject. They have no parallel in Jewish teaching or prayers of the period. If therefore we are seeking the *differentia* of the teaching of Jesus upon the Kingdom of God, it is here that it must be found. This declaration that the Kingdom of God has already come necessarily dislocates the whole eschatological scheme in which its expected coming closes the long vista of the future. The *eschaton* has moved from the future to the present, from the sphere of expectation into that of realized experience. It is therefore unsafe to assume that the content of the idea, "The Kingdom of God," as Jesus meant it, may be filled in from the speculations of apocalyptic writers.<sup>42</sup>

However subsequently modified and refined, Dodd's position is still supported. "There is no going back from the

<sup>42</sup>C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, 34.

recognition that this [the reign of God as present] is an emphasis truly to be found in the the teaching of Jesus concerning the Kingdom of God."<sup>43</sup>

Perrin summarizes the evidence for (the reign of) God as present in the teaching of Jesus as follows: (1) The presence of the reign is part of the message of the parables, in particular the hidden treasure and pearl (Mt 13:44-46), the tower builder and king going to war (Lk 14:28-33), the fig tree (Mk 13:28), and the lamp under the bushel (Mk 4:21). (2) Jesus consistently spoke of himself in eschatological terms (Mk 2:18-22). (3) Jesus applied to himself biblical prophecies which referred to the eschatological age (Mt 11:2-6 refers to Jesus as a fulfillment of Is 35:5; 61:1). (4) Jesus spoke of his ministry in terms which imply that the messianic times have begun (Mt 12:51). (5) The exorcisms manifest the kingdom's presence (Mt 12:28 // Lk 11:20).<sup>44</sup>

2. But, *there is still more to come*. Although (the reign of) God was a reality that was present on earth and in history, it was also a reality the fullness of which had not yet established or manifested itself. Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer called attention to future eschatology in the teaching of Jesus; and, in spite of the work of C.H. Dodd, this futurity in the teaching of Jesus cannot be denied.<sup>45</sup> Today almost all scholars maintain that the reign of God in the teaching of Jesus is both present and future, both already here but not yet consummated. One of the greatest witnesses to Jesus' belief that the reign had not yet been fully established was the centrality of the petition, "Thy kingdom come," in the "Our Father," an authentic saying of Jesus (Lk

<sup>43</sup>Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus*, 78.

-Ibid., 74-78.

<sup>45</sup>For a summary of the emphases of Weiss and Schweitzer, see Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus*, 16-36. Also see Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus, a Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. W. Montgomery (New York: Macmillan Co., [1906] 1961), 223-241; Johannes Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, trans. and ed. R. H. Hiers and D.L. Holland (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971). Perrin has summarized the evidence for the kingdom as a future reality in the teaching of Jesus. See *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus*, 79-11, esp. 83-90.

11:2 // Mt 6:10), in which he prayed and taught his disciples to pray for *the coming* of the rule of God (also see Mk 1:15; 9:1).

Dodd's interpretation of the parables had established the "presentness" of the heavenly rule; Jeremias' interpretation emphasized (the reign of) God as both present *and* future.<sup>46</sup> According to Jeremias, the future element envisioned by Jesus involved *both an imminent catastrophe and a fulfillment*. Different biblical scholars attempt to identify the bipolarity in varied ways. Jeremias speaks of Jesus' teaching on the reign of God as "eschatology that is in the process of realization."<sup>47</sup> Kummel uses the language of "fulfillment" and "promise"; Jesus' presence in history was a fulfillment that came with the promise that what had begun would be brought to completion.<sup>48</sup> Cullmann speaks about "already" and "not yet"; the decisive battle had already been won, but the final day had not yet arrived.<sup>49</sup>

3. *A climactic event is imminent.* A new day was dawning. (The reign of) God in the teaching of Jesus was experienced both as a present reality and as a hope for the future. In addition to Jesus' hope for the future, there was also the expectation of a course of events that was imminent. A difficulty in this aspect of the teaching of Jesus is that almost all references to it are likely to be influenced by the expectation of the early Church, which not only followed from the teaching of Jesus but also from their experience of the resurrection and the gift of the Spirit. There is no way to excise their sense of imminence from the texts. So is there

<sup>46</sup>For the kingdom as present, see Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 115-24, on "Now Is the Day of Salvation," and 124-46 on "God's Mercy for Sinners." For the kingdom as future, see 146-60 on "The Great Assurance," and 160-69 on "The Imminence of Catastrophe."

<sup>47</sup>See Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 230.

<sup>48</sup>Werner Georg Kummel, *Promise and Fulfillment. The Eschatological Message of Jesus*, trans. Dorothea Barton, Studies in Biblical Theology (London: SCM Press, 1969), 141-55.

<sup>49</sup>Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, trans. Floyd Filson (London: SCM Press, 1962), 71-106; *Salvation in History*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1967).

any basis in the teaching of Jesus that he offered not only a future hope but also an expectation for something close at hand?

Jesus' preaching did have the note of urgency to it (something climactic soon to happen) but he did not teach an imminent parousia in the way that we ordinarily understand that expression (an end of chronological time, a second coming, or the end of history as we know it).<sup>50</sup> Jesus expected *something* to happen soon. As a support for this, one ought not rely upon the so called apocalyptic "son of humanity" sayings based upon Daniel 7:13 (namely, Mk 13:30; 14:62) since these are probably not authentic sayings of Jesus, or sayings in which the teaching of Jesus within them is recoverable. Once one does not rely upon these sayings, it is by no means clear that Jesus taught an imminent eschatology of an apocalyptic sort. Yet the tone of imminence in his authentic words is not absent either.

Jesus' preaching had an urgency to it. To a great degree this urgency reflected not an "imminent" but a "realized" eschatology: now is the time to respond while the word is being proclaimed. It became increasingly clear to Jesus that he would most probably die a violent death. The quality of urgency reflected not only Jesus' present challenge to the hearers but also that which would be even more true after his death. Even more so would people be called upon to be "for him" or "against him." That choice was already here for many, but that choice would soon be decisive, inevitable, and its time was close at hand. One of the climactic eschatological events which Jesus perceived as imminent was probably his own death and the crisis which would follow upon it.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>50</sup>For an excellent summary of the material on Jesus and his teaching about the future and his future expectation, see Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus*, 131-147, where he discusses the opinions of G. R. Beasley-Murray, O. Cullmann, T.F. Glasson, J.A.T. Robinson, and E. Grasser. For Perrin's own position see *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus*, 190-201; *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, 154-206.

<sup>51</sup>Doubtless, Jesus taught that he would suffer a violent death. We ought not quickly set aside the opinion that what Jesus expected shortly was in fact his death,

But not only did Jesus' preaching carry with it something of the imminent (whether that be the decision for or against discipleship, or his death, or whatever) but the Jewish milieu was full of varied and inconsistent expectations with respect to the future. This does not imply that Jesus could not have or did not transcend them. In fact, I have argued that Jesus was no apocalypticist. Yet even the non-apocalyptic hope of Judaism was filled with eschatological expectation. Jesus' hope may not have been especially messianic (in the more dominant and obvious senses) or apocalyptic (in the more precise sense) but was still an expectation that the history of Israel and Judaism was soon to experience something climactic.

The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand;  
repent, and believe in the gospel. (Mark 1:15)

This saying is not simply expressing a realized eschatology. These present times already experience fulfillment; but the reign is not yet complete but close, at hand. Nor does the saying simply indicate future hope in general; rather it indicates the expectation of something imminent. Thus there are three elements in the teaching of Jesus: present (Mt 12:28), future (Mt 6:10), imminent (Mk 1:15). Even if Mark 1:15 and Matthew 10:7 are "summaries of the message of Jesus" developed in the Jesus tradition, as Perrin suggests, there is no reason to suggest anything less than accurate summaries.<sup>52</sup> They do not imply any developed doctrine of

resurrection, and the coming of the Spirit. See T. F. Glasson, *The Second Advent, the Origin of the New Testament Doctrine*, revised edition (London: Epworth Press, 1947). Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, suggested that the resurrection of Jesus may have fulfilled his expectation, 211.

<sup>52</sup>See Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus*, 199-201. Perrin's argument is unconvincing to me here. If it is authentic, why must it be prior to his teaching on the presence and future of the kingdom? It is simply another aspect of the future expectation, and may even be later rather than earlier when Jesus has a more heightened consciousness of impending death. Also, in light of Perrin's later work in *Jesus and the Language*, I am wondering if Perrin himself would not perceive this as treating Jesus' use of the kingdom too much as a steno-symbol rather than a tensive symbol. Cf., A.L. Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966), 90.

parousia as a second coming. They simply reflect Jesus' expectation of something climactic and imminent. Perhaps at this point we ought to introduce the thesis of Marcus Borg: "What faced the hearers of Jesus was not the imminent and inevitable end of the world, but the imminent and yet contingent destruction of Israel." <sup>53</sup>

One of the difficulties in any discussion of Jesus' eschatology is that eschatology in its most precise sense played only a *minor* role in Jesus' teaching! If by eschatology we mean Jesus' teaching about the reign of God, there is no question but that (the reign of) God was the center of Jesus' proclamation and preaching. But if by eschatology we mean more precisely a teaching about the end times, <sup>54</sup> the end of history as we know it, then this *eschaton* is on the periphery of Jesus' teaching, which is not to deny that Jesus believed in resurrection from the dead and judgment. It is simply that Jesus' understanding of (the reign of) God was not apocalyptic, but prophetic in the old sense; *historically conscious*. Like the prophets of old, Jesus was able to read history and God.

The entire discussion on the temporal aspect of Jesus' eschatology (Jesus' doctrine on the reign of God; Jesus' doctrine of God) can be misplaced or over-emphasized. <sup>55</sup> If, as we have maintained, proper understanding of the language of the reign of God as metaphor indicates (as suggested by targumic usage) that the expression is *a way of speaking about* God, the emphasis is not then on a kingdom or reign (with its concomitant concerns about whether it has come or is still to come) but on God. The temporal questions became non-problematic, for God is here, near, and coming. Thus Jesus' teaching about God is not so much eschatological in the strict sense as it is theological, insightful, prophetic. This does not deny our three previous points in

<sup>53</sup>Marcus Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), 202.

<sup>54</sup>See my discussion of eschatology in chapter two. Also Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*, 4-20.

<sup>55</sup>See in particular Bruce Chilton, *The Kingdom of God*, 1-26, and n. 31 of this chapter. Also Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*, 4-20.

reference to Jesus' eschatology, but rather insists that they are not about some *thing* (a kingdom) but Someone (God). God is present: the one-who-is-with-us. But there is still more to hope for; God is the one-who-is-coming. And a dramatic manifestation of God (the one-who-is-coming-to-be-with-us) is imminent (and this may refer to Jesus' own resurrection and vindication, the outpouring of the Spirit, or the crisis facing Israel).

Thus the word "eschatology," as widely used, is on the verge of losing all meaning. It may be best to abandon it, and use other language to say what we mean. The eschatological teaching of Jesus is Jesus' teaching about the reign of God; that is to say, Jesus' teaching about God - a teaching experientially based and prophetically/ biblically grounded.

To turn to a thesis of Marcus Borg and Gerd Theissen: the Jesus movement was essentially a renewal movement within Judaism.<sup>56</sup> Along with the Pharisees, Essenes, and resistance movement, the Jesus movement was one of many renewal movements competing for the loyalty of the people. The Jesus movement, and its program of renewal, were rooted in Jesus' conception and experience of God.

For Borg, other Jewish renewal movements were characterized by their quest for holiness, with holiness being interpreted as separation and purity. This post-exilic quest for holiness explains the emphasis on sabbath observance, proper tithing, racial purity, the emphasis on Torah and Temple. The Essene quest for holiness led to a separation from mainline Jewish society. The Pharisees' quest led to a separation *within* Jewish society, although theirs was envisioned as a program for all of Israel. Within the resistance movement, holiness required Judeans to structure their corporate lives unhindered by foreign occupation and oppression. Jesus' program for renewal must be understood within Israel's quest for holiness, but for Jesus renewal did not imply separation but fidelity to the God of Israel as a God of

<sup>56</sup>Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*, 17-20, 51-72, 123-43. Gerd Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), esp. 1, 8-23, 77-95.

compassion. Jesus defined holiness as compassion rather than separation,<sup>57</sup> and his definition was rooted in his personal and prophetic understanding of God. For Jesus, God was compassion, forgiveness, and mercy.

Jesus' understanding of God and holiness was not ahistorical, apolitical, or simply a doctrine of the future. As the destiny of the Ninevites was contingently wrapped up with the preaching of Jonah, so the destiny of Israel was at stake in the competing programs for the renewal of Israel. For Borg then "what faced the hearers of Jesus was not the imminent and inevitable end of the world, but the imminent and yet contingent destruction of Israel."<sup>58</sup> Jesus perceived the quest for a holiness understood as separation and racial purity to be an invitation to disaster for Israel. Jesus' concern was for the imminent crisis facing Israel, for the *history* of Israel, not a consciousness derived from a belief that history was coming to an end.

4. With respect to the course of future events and further manifestations of the sovereignty of God, *we cannot speak precisely about what Jesus in fact expected*. Central to his teaching was that even he did not know exactly what to expect. Jesus expected something to happen shortly. But what? When? Shortly, yes, but exactly when: we do not know the day or the hour. And what was about to happen? Jesus' authentic sayings indicate that these were unanswered questions. Jesus was calling forth faith and trust in God, not answering questions in an apocalyptic debate or eschatological catechism. What is clear in the teaching of Jesus is certainty (Jeremias speaks of the great assurance), but at the same time lack of knowledge about specifics. Jesus was a man of faith whose trust in God was his own starting point in life.

Jesus did not provide specific information about what was to come; he avoided and discouraged any type of seek-

<sup>57</sup>Here I prefer to speak differently than Borg. It is not so much that mercy or compassion is an alternative to holiness (Borg., 123-43) but a new understanding or definition of holiness. For Jesus, holiness is compassion.

<sup>58</sup>Same as n. 53.

ing after signs. Norman Perrin in his early work on the teaching of Jesus maintained that Jesus "gave neither specific form to his future expectation . . . nor did he express it in terms of a specific time element." <sup>59</sup> A.L. Moore has described Jesus' perspective on the End as an undelimited nearness. <sup>60</sup>

Although Jesus did not provide specifics, we can say in general that Jesus expected his ministry, teaching and reputation to be vindicated by God. Jesus believed in the doctrine of the resurrection, and there is no reason to think that he did not expect his own resurrection. Martin Rist has written both that "It is understandable that Jesus evidently entertained a belief in the resurrection of the dead, for this was taught both by the Pharisees and in the synagogue," and also that Jesus "did not stress the resurrection belief." <sup>61</sup> Jesus believed in resurrection, yet it was not central in his preaching.

Jesus did not teach a doctrine of the parousia in the sense of one to come who would establish a new age which would be an end to history as we know it. This follows from what we have said about the lack of specifics in the teaching of Jesus as well as the historical and prophetic consciousness of Jesus. Yet the discussion has caused much debate. <sup>62</sup> The

<sup>59</sup>Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching Of Jesus*, 204; also 57.

<sup>60</sup>Cf. A.L. Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966). I do not agree with all of Moore's exposition, such as his interpretation of the Parousia hope in the early Church, but I appreciate his articulation and argument that Jesus did not make specific his expectation with regard to the timing of the Parousia. Within the teaching of Jesus, for Moore, there is only an undelimited nearness, namely, no belief that the End *must* come within a specified period. In other words, Jesus' expectation is open with respect to the End. The Parousia for Jesus is near but not delimited. It is the character of the End to be both near and open. A delay as such is not unexpected because there is no delimited, specifying expectation - other than both the nearness and the graciousness (freedom and grace) of God. Thus it is not within our knowledge to specify how much time remains. That Jesus himself was not clear about what would happen, see James D.G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, 211.

<sup>61</sup> Martin Rist, "Jesus and Eschatology," in *Transitions in Biblical Scholarship*, ed. J.C. Rylaarsdam (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1968), 193-215. The quotes are from 198-99.

<sup>62</sup> See Perrin, *The Kingdom Of God in the Teaching Of Jesus*, 130-147. Among others, Oscar Cullmann maintained that Jesus did have a Parousia doctrine;

opinion that Jesus taught a parousia doctrine is tied up with the New Testament "son of humanity" sayings in which Jesus spoke about "the son of humanity" coming in power on the clouds of heaven, which "son of humanity" may or may not be identified with Jesus himself (Mk 13:26; 14:62). A common opinion is that "son of humanity" referred to an apocalyptic messianic judge and savior but that Jesus did not identify this figure with himself. In other words, Jesus taught the coming of someone other than himself who would vindicate Jesus as well. But we have rejected this interpretation.

There was no messianic "son of humanity" conception in pre-Christian Judaism. The basis in the life of Jesus for the "son of humanity" sayings was his own particular way of speaking. In the language of Jesus "son of humanity" had no particular apocalyptic nor necessarily messianic content. The most appropriate *Sitz im Leben* for the future "son of humanity" sayings was the eschatology of the Church whose expectations had been heightened and influenced by the resurrection of Jesus and the phenomena accompanying the gift of the Spirit. Thus "son of humanity" was a speech pattern characteristic of Jesus which undoubtedly contained within it his own enigmatic self-understanding but does not provide any basis for arguing that Jesus taught the future coming of some such figure. Jesus taught his own future vindication and resurrection, but we have no basis for saying more.

One cannot say that Jesus was mistaken about the parousia since he did not expect one or teach one.<sup>63</sup> Here is an

among others J.A.T. Robinson maintained that Jesus did not. See Cullmann, "The Return of Christ," in *The Early Church* (London: SCM, 1956), 141-72; Robinson, *Jesus and His Coming* (New York: Abingdon, 1957). Also see Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*, 201-27.

<sup>63</sup>Two insightful responses to this difficulty are those of Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 139-41; Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 152-54, 542-43. I think Jeremias answers "yes" too quickly, although he qualifies this yes. The second qualification is important in that it reflects respect for the freedom of God, a point emphasized by Schillebeeckx. My impression is that there lies underneath Jeremias the tone that we know more about Jesus' imminent expectation than we in fact do. Schillebeeckx, 152, contains the correct emphasis with respect to the question.

instance of scholars being mistaken about the eschatology of Jesus, not Jesus being mistaken about an imminent return. This does not imply that the delay of the Parousia was not a problem in the early Church. It was, but they were the ones who expected something which never came in the form they expected it. Jesus resisted such calculations and lived by faith. Although there is much we do not know about Jesus' own hope for the future, we have an insufficient basis for saying that the climactic event he felt to be close at hand was a coming of an apocalyptic "son of humanity" or his own return.

This does not mean that there is no validity to the question of whether Jesus' expectations were fulfilled or not. We simply do not have enough information about what Jesus expected to determine whether he was mistaken. He expected to die, be raised, and be vindicated. He expected his death to be a source of crisis for his disciples. He preached the presentness and nearness of the power of God. He perhaps anticipated a crisis of disastrous proportions facing the nation. But he taught little about the specifics of what he actually expected except that a new era was in the process of beginning. In fact, the life of Jesus leads us to believe that he was willing to live by faith in this regard, to leave the future to God. Jesus' hope was based on his confidence in God, and he needed no more than that. Jesus was aware of the freedom of God and to have said more would be to curtail God's freedom, whereas it was the freedom and power and sovereignty of God that formed the center of his message, and that God was here for those who had the eyes to see.

5. (*The Reign of*) *God calls forth joy, hope, expectation, trust, faith, and confidence in God.* The response of the individual who hears the proclamation of Jesus varies. The presence of God fills one with joy; the eschatological banquet is about to begin or has already begun; it is a time for feasting and laughter. The "not yetness," however, calls for a hope grounded in confidence that days of fullness will come. The imminence of a new beginning, a new creation, an eschatological and climactic urgency calls forth more

than hope; it stirs up anticipation, expectation. Yet, although God is here, already present as King, God is present only to the one who has eyes to see or ears to hear. The basis for the continuing establishment of God as sovereign on earth is our trust in God. We can be confident. God reigns where there is faith. God's presence is there in response to faith. Without faith one cannot see (the reign of) God. We cannot say, "Here it is." And the fact that the reign of God is "not of this world" does not mean "another world," a supernatural, transcendental world, although that world is not excluded. God already and eternally reigns "there"; the reign of which Jesus spoke is "on earth" as in heaven. It is not of this world in the sense that it is not like the kingdoms of this world. It is not one kingdom alongside others, or over others. It is established on earth, but not of this world. The reign is visible and tangible only to those who trust in God - unlike worldly powers which make their power known and felt in other ways. In his preaching and healing Jesus was a man of faith and a prophet of hope. His starting point in his ministry was the trust in God which he learned in the wilderness. God calls forth faith and trust which in turn awaken one to see more clearly the presence of God.

6. Insofar as Jewish hope and eschatology were concerned with God's salvation which some of the people eagerly awaited in the not too distant future, Jesus' eschatology was by contrast an innovation in that he taught that *the moment of salvation is now*. This "eschatology" of Jesus was not strictly speaking an eschatology; its primary reference was not to the future or to the end of history. Its primary reference was to God. Jesus did have a concern for the future, but what was predominate in the parables is that the present was the important moment in the history of salvation.

Jesus did speak of the future; there is even more to come from God. He saw the critical moments ahead in his own mission, the suffering and rejection to come, as well as critical moments for his disciples, after his death and in the face of false teachers and persecution. Momentous times

were ahead. Yet, in all of this, Jesus remained a prophet of hope with confidence in God. It was not the future but the present that was urgent. This present moment in the history of salvation, emphasized in Dodd's realized eschatology which has not been dated even if modified, is the proper focus for understanding the preaching of Jesus. Jesus turns our attention from a gaze toward fulfillment in the future to the challenge to respond in faith and action to God now.

This call for an immediate present response is well exemplified in the parable of the supper from which the invited guests excused themselves. The invitation came; the guests had other things to do; they missed the opportune moment and it was too late. The Matthean version (22:1-14) actually contains two parables, the parable of the marriage feast (22:1-10) and the parable of the wedding garment (22:11-14). Originally these were two separate parables. The Lucan version (14:16-24) contains only the story of the banquet and is probably closer to the original. The version in the Gospel of Thomas (64) may be even closer to the original than Luke's. Both Matthew and Luke use the parable to interpret the Gentile mission of the early Church. Those originally invited to the Messianic feast, the Jews, have been passed over and the invitation is to the Gentiles. In Luke's version the servant goes out three times; the first call is to the original guests, or Jews; the second call is to the poor, probably the poor and the outcasts among the Jews; the third is to those on the highways and outside the city, the Gentiles. The original point of the story, however, is the failure of those to respond when they received the invitation. Now is the moment; tomorrow may be too late.

7. Although the reign of God has already begun (God is already here!) and now is the time to decide on its behalf, God's sovereignty has not been fully established. When it is, *God will reign on earth*. The earth will proclaim that it belongs to God. It has become common for some to contrast prophetic eschatology and apocalyptic eschatology as a contrast between a this-worldly hope and an other-worldly hope. Given the exaggerated influence of apocalyptic thought on Jesus, many have come to think of Jesus as

proclaiming a kingdom "not of this world," an other-worldly kingdom whose day is imminent. This is often associated with Jesus' eschatological teaching about a future and apocalyptic Parousia. These emphases, however, are misplaced.

The contrast between prophetic and apocalyptic expectations concerns not where but the way in which God will be established as King on earth. Apocalyptic thought sees an intervention from above and a new creation or new Jerusalem descend; the prophets see the future as the culmination of history as we know it. The prophets spoke of a new Jerusalem and new creation, but with the sense of their being related to the events of history, not transcending those events. Prophetic eschatology became more nationalistic, more political. But both prophetic and apocalyptic eschatology saw God reigning on earth, however it be accomplished. Judaism, and Jewish eschatology as well, remained primarily this-worldly in its hope.

We have rejected an interpretation of Jesus in thoroughgoing apocalyptic terms. Jesus taught no apocalyptic "son of humanity" eschatology. The reign of God proclaimed by Jesus was a God whose presence could be felt on earth. Granted the reign proclaimed by Jesus was not *of or from* this world (Jn 18:36).<sup>64</sup> It was God's reign, not a worldly kingdom. *It was not like the kingdoms of this world*, but it would still be a kingdom on this earth, God sovereign on this earth. Given the propensity of some of the disciples to misinterpret the reign of which Jesus spoke, Jesus emphasized that it was not a kingdom like the kingdoms of old. When God's reign is established on earth, there will be no positions of false dignity and social status; there will simply be God as King and God's people. Although Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer does not contain Matthew's "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," there is no reason to think that the Matthean version is unfaithful to the teaching

<sup>64</sup>The textual basis for Jesus' teaching that God's reign was not of this world is John 18:36. This does not imply, however, not on earth. The Greek *ek* in the text is also properly translated as "from" rather than "of."

of Jesus. The future tense in the authentic beatitudes of Jesus, as we have seen, implies soon, and here. "Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh" (Lk 6:21). There is no implication of satisfaction and laughter in some other world, but rather here and now on earth. Jesus' hope was a Jewish hope, a prophetic hope, a future hope for this earth. What he exactly envisioned again we cannot say. How it was all to happen, he himself did not seem to know. His trust was in God, and his hope was for the "now" and also the "here." Jesus proclaimed that God had already begun to reign on earth and would reign even more fully on earth in the times ahead.

8. God is already reigning. Now is the time to see this for those who have eyes to see. Yet what God has in store for his people surpasses even the present blessings; there is more still to come. When God's reign is fully established on earth, *God will reign over all the nations*. Although Jesus saw his own mission as particularly a mission to the Jews, and particularly to the poor in Israel, the reign of God he proclaimed would not exclude the Gentiles. Although his mission was primarily to proclaim this inclusive reign of God to the Jews, Jesus knew God's reign on earth to be "for the nations." Israel would lose her special place although not God's special love for her. God's reign would not be nation conscious, but humanity conscious. We can see how this teaching of Jesus, especially this eschatological teaching, and particularly this teaching about the unrestricted character of God's reign would get him in trouble. Jesus' teaching cuts away at the doctrine of election itself.

### *Jesus' Ethical Teaching*

Jesus' preaching and teaching were essentially God-talk. Jesus talked to God in prayer, and in his ministry he talked about God to others.<sup>65</sup> Yet much of Jesus' God-talk was also

<sup>65</sup> take this expression from the life of Dominic who is reported to have said to his followers that they should speak "only to God or of God." M. H. Vicaire, *St.*

about us. To talk of his heavenly Father was to talk about us as well. The reign of God not only implies God's outpouring of love for the people; it also implies the sovereignty of God as manifest in our love for God and for neighbor. Another way of saying this is to say that Jesus' teaching was not only eschatological, in the sense of centered on God's reign, but also ethical, centered on love as the sign of God's sovereignty on earth. This "ethics" was no mere transitional ethics, nor only a utopian ideal; it was an "ethics of discipleship," a way of life for his followers, the way those live who have been grasped already by (the reign of) God.<sup>66</sup> The eschatological and ethical content in Jesus' preaching are not in opposition to each other. The ethical pertains to how those live and respond who have been touched by the already manifest power of the eschatological reign of God. God's reign implies both a future hope and a present way of living.

We can see within the teaching of Jesus two core elements, however we phrase them: consolation and challenge, or forgiveness and repentance, or the relativization of the Law and reverence for the the Law, or mercy and judgment, or God's love and love of neighbor. Jesus' preaching was "the good news of the reign of God"; it was a word of consolation enfolded in the behavior of Jesus as he shared fellowship with the outcast. Yet God's coming as a consolation to the people did not revoke his word as a word of challenge. God's love was both compassionate and demanding. It was both a word of forgiveness and a word which involved repentance. Preaching repentance was as obvious a part of the teaching of Jesus as was proclaiming forgiveness (Mk 1:15; Mt 4:17).

Jesus' attitude toward the Law is not easy to discern. Jesus did not annul or repudiate the Law. Although it is commonplace to describe Jesus as anti-law (anti-Torah),

*Dominic and His Times*, trans. Kathleen Pond (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1964), 331. The expression is contained in the Dominican Constitutions.

**66**Hans Bold, "Eschatological or Theocentric Ethics?" in *The Kingdom Of God*, ed. Bruce Chilton (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 133-53.

what Jesus opposed was a false understanding of the Law. Jesus opposed rigidification and trivialization of the Law, the gap that the Law was allowed to create between "strict observance" and the *am ha-aretz*, hypocrisy and self-righteousness. Jesus' hostility to the scribes did not flow from his repudiation of the Law but from his understanding of it, an understanding that was quite compatible with the Judaism of his day if one looks at that Judaism at its best rather than in the light of Christian bias. Much of the anti-Jewish and anti-Pharisaic language of the Gospels flows from a post-resurrection Church uneasy about its relationship to Judaism and from Jewish-Christian conflict after 70 C.E. as Judaism tried to rebuild itself after the fall of Jerusalem. Thus the question of the attitude of the historical Jesus toward the Law is by no means easy to determine. The early Church had come to the decision that the Mosaic Law was not binding, but this decision was not explicit, or even implicit, in the teaching of Jesus, who observed the Law even if his observance was offensive to some interpretations of it.

There is no clear evidence that Jesus taught an abrogation or invalidity to any of the Jewish laws. If he had, it was with respect to eating forbidden, non-kosher, unclean foods. Matthew gives the impression that this was more a question of triviality of some prescriptions, such as washing before eating (15:17-20). Mark's version is more explicit, stating that Jesus actually declared all foods as clean, edible (7:18-19). But the final sentence of Mark 7:19, "Thus he declared all foods clean," is considered by some a gloss, or the work of the evangelist who was making the meaning clear for the Church. Thus it is variously interpreted.<sup>67</sup> Both the Revised Standard Version and the Jerusalem Bible translate it within parentheses. If these were the words of Jesus himself, it would be the only example we have of Jesus teaching that some prescriptions of the Law were no longer intact. Matthew's version may well reflect better the attitude of Jesus toward the Law, that not all law was of equal importance.

<sup>67</sup>See Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 28-29. Also see A.E. Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), 39-40).

In his approach to the Sabbath, as in his approach to the Law as a whole, Jesus *understood* the Sabbath.<sup>68</sup> He went to the heart of what the Sabbath was about, and thus what the Law pertaining to it was about. Jesus' disciples plucked ears of grain on the Sabbath (Mk 2:23-28) and Jesus performed a cure on the Sabbath (Mk 2:1-5). According to Jesus, "the Sabbath was made for the people, not people for the Sabbath" (Mk 2:27). This was not new teaching. Since the time of the Maccabees, "the Sabbath is for the people" was an expression that had been in circulation.<sup>69</sup> The Sabbath in Israel was originally an expression of compassion; it gave rest to slaves and cattle. Later, theology supported the practice in the creation story. But the Sabbath had literally been a gift of God to humankind (Dt 5:12-15; Gn 2:2-3; Ex 20:8-11). The Sabbath visibly expressed the compassion of God. Jesus knew God, and understood Sabbath as a gift from God, not a burden. Schillebeeckx writes, "The sabbath rest is interpreted as a 'time for doing good,' not as an action specially suited to the sabbath."<sup>70</sup> Jesus relativized Sabbath law by understanding Sabbath and its radically humanistic character, how God by decreeing Sabbath showed himself to be for us, and hence how being for others on the Sabbath could in no way be a violation of it.

Jesus was not advocating non-observance of the Sabbath. Rather he called into question the attitude, form of observance, or interpretation which had turned God's gift to us into an unbearable burden. Jesus criticized not the Law but a particular interpretation of the Law. For the essence of the Law was love of God and love of neighbor. Jesus' critique of the Pharisaic interpretation was quite Jewish. Jesus was a Jew upholding the Law, critical of a particular Jewish application of the Law as not being faithful to who God was as One-for-Others.

<sup>68</sup>Schillebeeckx's interpretation of Jesus and Law is very much to the point. See *Jesus*, 229-56. For his discussion of sabbath see 237-43. Also see A.E. Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History*, 36-65; and Marcus Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*, 145-62.

<sup>69</sup>Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 239.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, 241.

Jesus was not critical of all Pharisees, nor necessarily of Pharisaism itself. Rather, Jesus was critical of a hypocrisy which he found in the lives of many so-called religious people. Rather than allowing the Law to be God's gift, and God to be grace, they imposed all kinds of burdens and restrictions which prevented people from experiencing God as grace and compassion. Jesus preached rather that (the reign of) God was compassion. Jesus' anger with the scribes was with the burden they imposed and the hypocrisy in their own lives (Lk 11:42-47).

Jesus' conflict with the scribes and lawyers did not place him outside Judaism. His was a very Jewish and prophetic critique. Conflictual interpretations of the Law had been part and parcel of Judaism since the beginning of hellenization in Palestine and the emergence of sectarianism.<sup>71</sup> Jesus did not see himself in his Sabbath observance as going against Judaism. Rather he saw himself going to the heart of Judaism. Jesus did not reject the Law but he did not idolize it either. He went to the heart of the Law which was an expression of the will of God. God's will was always determinative for Jesus and he had an uncanny, intuitive awareness of what God would want or do under certain circumstances.

We can learn more about the positive ethical teaching of Jesus by looking at the "sermon on the mount" (Mt 5-7), which is a major collection of the teaching of Jesus. The material in chapters 5-7 is not a unified sermon of Jesus of Nazareth but is rather a collection by Matthew of diverse Jesus material.<sup>72</sup> The collection does provide us with authentic material although some of the material has its

<sup>71</sup>Schillebeeckx discusses the close relationship between Jesus' interpretation of the Law and the Hellenistic Jewish Diaspora interpretation, which was influential in the formation of early Christian efforts to articulate attitudes toward the Law, *Jesus*, 230-33, 248-49.

<sup>72</sup>The best critical treatment in English of the sermon is W.D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: University Press, 1964); it also contains extensive bibliography. A shorter version was later published under the title of *The Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: University Press, 1966). Also see F.W. Beare, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), 123-201; Marcus Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of*

origin in the early Church rather than in the teaching of Jesus or at least has undergone development in the course of its history. Our concern here is not the setting of the material in the early Church, nor in the Gospel of Matthew itself, but rather the setting in the life of Jesus insofar as this is ascertainable. We will focus on some of the Q material in the Matthean sermon.

*The Beatitudes.* The Q material at the very least consists of the four beatitudes, Matthew 5:3, 5, 6, 11-12 // Luke 6:20-23. As we have discussed, the Lucan form is probably more original.

*The Image of Salt.* The Q material here is Matthew 5:13; Luke 14:34-35 (also see Mark 9:50). In the original setting, the image of salt may have referred to the disciples, or may have been a reference to Israel. It depicts Jesus' way of speaking with images.

*The Law Remains.* The Q verse is Matthew 5:18 or Luke 16:17. One can see here the difficulty of determining the actual teaching of Jesus on the Law and of even using the Matthean sermon as a source for the teaching of Jesus. We have seen how careful we had to be in order to determine which beatitudes were actually sayings of Jesus. We can say that Jesus used the image of salt, but it is almost impossible to know to whom it originally referred in the teaching of Jesus. This verse considered by itself raises questions. If we take the Lucan version (16:17), Manson suggests that the saying originally referred not to Jesus' teaching on the Law but to the opinion of the scribes which Jesus in fact condemns: "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for the scribes to give up the smallest bit of that tradition by which they make the Law of no effect."<sup>73</sup> Yet Manson is unconvincing. It appears strange that if Jesus had openly rejected the teaching of the scribes about the continuation of

*Jesus, 123-34*; David Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Greenwood, S.C.: Attic Press, 1972), 108-55; Joachim Jeremias, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963); and Hans Kung, *On Being a Christian*, trans. Edward Quinn (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1976), 244-77; Jan Lambrecht, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1985).

<sup>73</sup>T.W. Manson, *Sayings of Jesus, 135.*

the Law, his disciples would have taught precisely the opposite, even granting their difficult situation vis-a-vis Judaism. Yet it is difficult to conclude what Jesus did say precisely.

The three verses from Matthew 5:17-19 are probably three separate sayings which were originally transmitted separately. The authenticity of all three can be challenged. Nevertheless, the Q saying in its Lucan form cannot be as easily dismissed, and one must assume that it reflects the attitude if not the exact words of Jesus. F.W. Beare comments on the Matthean verses:

The question of authenticity is not of primary importance; whether Jesus stated his position in precisely this form of words or not, the saying is a faithful statement of his fundamental attitude. He holds consistently that the Law was given to Israel by God, and that it retains its validity for him and for those who would follow him. If a man would "enter into life" he must "keep the commandments" (Mt 19:17). Only if the principle is applied in the minute way which is demanded in verses 18 and 19 may we feel that he is misrepresented. And Matthew himself brings a broadly different interpretation of how the "fulfillment" of the Law is accomplished, when he sums up the basic teaching of Jesus in the words of the Golden Rule. "Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and prophets" (7:12).<sup>74</sup>

Although it can be suggested that there is conflict between such a teaching of Jesus and his openness and authority with respect to the Law, it is most likely that Jesus saw his own behavior and interpretation not as a violation but as the fulfillment of the true meaning of the Law. For Jesus it was not a question of doing away with the Law but of properly understanding it.

*The Antitheses.* The Q material includes Jesus' teaching on divorce (Mt 5:32 // Lk 16:18), and love of enemies (Mt 5:38-48 // Lk 6:27-36). To interpret the antitheses as an

<sup>74</sup>F.W. Beare, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 142.

attack on the Law or Jesus' teaching as opposed to the Law is to misrepresent them. "The fact is that in none of the Antitheses is there an intention to annul the provisions of the Law but only to carry them out to their ultimate meaning."<sup>75</sup> The antitheses do not oppose Jesus and the Law, but rather reflect Jesus going to the heart of the matter, to the spirit, to the full implications, to the true meaning. The "new teaching" of Jesus shows the extent to which a true follower of the Law must go in order to fulfill it. But this is not "new teaching" as much as Jesus' application and interpretation. What is clear is not so much Jesus' opposition to the Law but his own authority with respect to it.

Within the Q material, such as the teaching on divorce and the command to love one's enemies, it appears as if Jesus was changing the Law. Jesus' teaching on divorce, however, was not an abrogation of the Law but an interpretation of it, and an interpretation compatible within Judaism. Varied interpretations of the divorce command existed within Judaism, among the schools of Hillel and Shammai and the Essenes. The interpretation of the "school of Jesus" could be placed along with theirs.<sup>76</sup> Jesus did abandon the principle of an eye for an eye (Mt 5:39-42; Lk 6:29-30). This, however, was also in order to fulfill the Law as Jesus understood it. A proper understanding of the law of love of neighbor in Leviticus requires the breadth to which Jesus gave to it.

<sup>75</sup>W.D. Davies, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 29; *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*, 102. Also see D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (New York: Arno Press, [1965] 1973), 55-62.

<sup>76</sup>For a further discussion of divorce in the New Testament teaching, see Jacques Dupont, *Afariage et divorce dans l'Evangile* (Bruges, Belgium: Abbaye de Saint Andre, 1959); Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Matthean Divorce Texts and Some New Palestinian Evidence," *Theological Studies* 37 (1976), 107-226; Thomas Fleming, "Christ and Divorce," *Theological Studies* 24 (1963), 106-120; Wilfrid Harrington, "The New Testament and Divorce," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 39 (1972), 178-87; Quentin Quesnell, "Made Themselves Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 30 (1968), 335-58; Bruce Vawter, "Divorce and the New Testament," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 39 (1977), 528-42.

Matthew 5:44-48 and Luke 6:27-36 go to the heart of the ethical teaching of Jesus and his interpretation of the Law. The Law can be summarized for Jesus by the word "love." In fact, the whole Law can be contained in the twofold command "to love God and neighbor" (Mk 12:28-34; Mt 22:34-40; Lk 10:25-28). Both of these commands can be found in the Torah (Dt 6:4-5; Lv 19:18), but Jesus interpreted them by showing the extent to which true love of neighbor leads us; it includes love of enemies as well.<sup>77</sup>

The particular structure of the antitheses is Matthean. In the Q material, this is not a common element. Thus it is probably Matthew's style. Likewise the content of many of the antitheses may be Matthean or from the early Church. But the Q material has claim to authenticity. Jesus probably spoke about divorce-. References can be found in both Q and Mark (Mk 10:11-12; Mt 19:9; as well as Lk 16:18 // Mt 5:31-32). Likewise the teaching on love has claim to authenticity. Matthew casts it (5:38-48) in the form of two antitheses; the golden rule comes later in Matthew's sermon (7:12). The Lucan formulation of the love command (6:27-36) is probably the more original, however.

But I say to you that hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To those who strike you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from those who take away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to every one who begs from you; and of those who take away your goods do not ask for them again. And as you wish that people would do to you, do so to them.

If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to

<sup>77</sup>I have discussed love in the teaching of Jesus in *The Power of Love* (Chicago: Thomas More Press, 1979), esp. 125-45, 214-33. See PHEME PERKINS, *Love Commands in the New Testament* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do good and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. (Lk 6:27-36)

Our neighbors include our enemies as well, who are not to be excluded from our love, as they are not excluded from God's love. The teaching was bold, frank and radical. Jesus saw it as the heart of true religion, like the teaching of the prophets of old. At its core it was Judaism; it was Jesus' interpretation of Judaism, of the Law. It is what the Law ultimately is about.

Jesus' teaching on love of enemies was not in contradiction to the Law. Nowhere does the Law explicitly teach not to love enemies. Yet at times such seems to have been the attitude which was encouraged (Ps 129:21f; Dt 7:2). Certainly in the time of Jesus this was reflected in the attitude toward outcasts and Gentiles in the teaching of the Pharisees. The exhortation to hate one's enemies was explicit in the Qumran sect, whose teaching was not the Law but an interpretation present in sectarianism.<sup>78</sup> Jesus interpreted the Law differently because he understood the intent of the Law differently. One characteristic of Jesus' teaching, as pointed out by W.D. Davies, was its radical, uncompromising character. If one contrasts the Q material with the Matthean material as a whole, Matthew has already set about the task of adapting the teaching of Jesus to the ongoing life of the Christian community.

Luke 6:36 (Be compassionate as God is compassionate) is a concise statement of the relationship between Jesus' eschatology or doctrine of God and Jesus' ethics, is a reflection of the same teaching which we have seen in the beatitudes (God

<sup>78</sup>See F.W. Beare, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 161; W.D. Davies, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 81-83, 146-47; David Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 129-30.

belongs to the people), and is a programmatic statement of Jesus' understanding of holiness and the renewal of Judaism.<sup>79</sup> It is a succinct statement of Jesus' ethics.

Chapter six of the sermon contains Jesus' instructions on prayer and the "Our Father" which we have considered previously. Chapter six contains further material from Q -about storing up true treasure (Mt 6:19-21 // Lk 12:33-34); the eye as the lamp of the body (Mt 6:22-23 // Lk 11:34-36); no one can serve both God and money (Mt 6:24 // Lk 16:13); and trust and providence (Mt 6:25-34 // Lk 12:22-32).

Chapter seven likewise contains much material from Q: Do not judge (Mt 7:1-5 // Lk 6:37-42); Ask and you shall receive (Mt 7:7-11 // Lk 11:9-13); the golden rule (Mt 7:12 // Lk 6:31); Enter by the narrow gate (Mt 7:13-14 // Lk 13:24); Beware of false prophets (Mt 7:15-20 // Lk 6:43-45); and the one who hears my words and does them is like someone building their house on rock (Mt 7:21, 24-27 // Lk 6:46-49).

Jesus did not preach or teach the annulment of the Law. He himself went to synagogue on the Sabbath, to Jerusalem for feasts and was present in the Temple. He celebrated Passover and respected the practices of fasting and prayer. He was not an iconoclast. In the one point pertaining to clean/ unclean food where he may have taught an abrogation of the Law, there is great doubt concerning the Marcan text. In general, Jesus upheld the Law. The antitheses which make Jesus appear as superior to the Law are Matthean, yet the authority with which Jesus ordinarily spoke of the Law does indicate he saw himself as a valid, authoritative, authorized interpreter. And his interpretation both radicalized uncompromisingly the heart of the Law while at the same time relativizing some prescriptions within it. Not all prescriptions were of the same significance. The heart of the

<sup>79</sup>On the point of compassion as Jesus' program of renewal, see Marcus Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*, 73-143. Also see Monika Hellwig, *Jesus, the Compassion of God* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1983).

Law which is the basis for interpreting the Law is the compassion of God. This "ethics of discipleship" is best summarized as a love of neighbor which includes love of enemy: Be compassionate.

### *Jesus' Teaching on Discipleship*

Sometimes Jesus' teaching pertained to a larger group or crowd, as is probably the case with the first three Lucan beatitudes (6:20-21). At other times Jesus' teaching was directed at a smaller group, those who regularly followed after him and considered themselves his disciples, as is probably the case in the fourth beatitude (Lk 6:22). Jesus not only taught his disciples, however; he also at times taught them *about being disciples*.

The nature of discipleship in the New Testament is a much discussed question. Jesus' closer followers were learners who acknowledged Jesus as rabbi and teacher, which master-disciple relationship had its precedents within the Judaism of Jesus' time.<sup>80</sup> Yet the call to discipleship carried a unique authority and demand. Jesus' disciples were called to a complete break with previous ties in order to be at the service of (the reign of) God. We cannot assume that all of the disciples were called by Jesus. In contrast to the Synoptic tradition in which Jesus takes the initiative, the tradition underlying John 1:35-49 presents Jesus in a more passive role. The disciples came to Jesus.<sup>81</sup> The earliest circle of disciples seems to have had an egalitarian character as well; they were all disciples of Jesus with no rank existing among them.<sup>82</sup> The disciples were not highly organized; they had the character more of a movement than of a communi-

<sup>80</sup>Benedict Viviano, *Study as Worship*, 158-71.

<sup>81</sup>J. Louis Martyn, *The Gospel of John in Christian History* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 93-98, 9-54, esp. 29-42.

<sup>82</sup>Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Biblical Roots for the Discipleship of Equals," *Journal of Pastoral Counselling* 14 (1979), 7-15.

ty.83 But what is it that Jesus taught this group about following after him?

Following after Jesus was a challenging and demanding reality. It required complete commitment. Among the authentic sayings of Jesus are the following:

No one who puts their hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God. (Lk 9:62)

How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God ... It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. (Mk 10:23,25)

Leave the dead to bury their own dead. (Lk 9:60a)

Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. (Mt 8:13-14)

But many that are first will be last, and the last first. (Mk 10:31)

For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted. (Lk 14:11)

These six sayings show the radical character of following after Jesus.

Not only was discipleship challenging, requiring complete commitment, entailing a new way of life in which the ordinary values of the world got reversed, it also entailed the clear possibility of suffering and rejection.<sup>84</sup> Jesus not only

§Gerd Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity*, 8-23; James D.G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, 104-6.

<sup>84</sup>A significant modern treatment of the theme of discipleship is that of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: The Macmillan Co., [1937] 1963). A literary study of the theme of discipleship in Mark's Gospel is Augustine Stock, *Call to Discipleship* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1982).

taught about his own suffering and impending death, but in so doing sought to illuminate his disciples about what was in store for them as well, as we saw in the fourth Lucan beatitude. The disciples could expect to be treated in the same fashion as Jesus himself would be treated.

Another saying from Q is open to application to the hardships of discipleship as well.

A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully taught will be like his teacher. (Lk 6:40)

Matthean editing applies it later as such:

If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household. (Mt 10:24-25)

Jesus instructed his disciples to be vigilant and unafraid in the face of opposition (Lk 12:4-12, 22-34).

Not only did disciples gather around Jesus, but Jesus sent some of them forth in order to carry his own mission and ministry further. They were not only learners, they became preachers and healers themselves. In the words of T.W. Manson, "The mission of the disciples is one of the best attested facts in the life of Jesus."<sup>85</sup> There is a mission charge in Q (Lk 10:2-3, 8-16) and also in Mark 6:6-13. Matthew 9:37-10:42 is a composite of material from Mark, Q, and special Matthean material. Luke has two mission charges; the first (9:1-6) is based on Mark, and the second (10:1-16) comprises Q as well as special Lucan material. The commissioning of the disciples and accompanying instruction is thus contained in all the sources of the Synoptic tradition.

Jesus' teaching about discipleship indicates its challenging, demanding character. It required a commitment, readiness, and trust. His followers could expect opposition, rejection, and persecution. Those who were ready were sent

<sup>85</sup>T.W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus*, 73. See 73-78, 179-84.

forth to proclaim (the nearness of) God. They were able to extend the ministry of Jesus further. However, discipleship was not a burden but a joy, for the disciple had been grasped by (the reign of) God and was already living in the midst of God. Discipleship was a privilege.

Blessed are the eyes which see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. (Lk 10:23-24)

### *Jesus' Teaching About Himself*

Although Jesus did teach some things about himself, he taught very little that was explicit. It was not a part of "The Teaching." He spoke about his fate, but in some ways this was a development of what he had to say about discipleship.

Although I have distinguished four elements in the teaching of Jesus (eschatology, ethics, discipleship, himself), one can readily see how these are so closely related that they are one. Jesus' eschatological teaching pertained to (the reign of) God. This eschatological reign, however, can so engage us that once entered, the disciple is challenged to live a certain way, in accord with the commandment of love. But this "ethics of discipleship" led to further aspects of discipleship and the fate of disciples who lived in accord with the demands of the heavenly reign. This same fate was something that Jesus taught was in store for himself first. All of these elements are aspects of the reign of God which had begun to take over the earth.

The New Testament implies that Jesus taught four things about his future: that he would suffer, die, be raised from the dead, and return again. We have noted that the last element, his return or future and second coming, is not found in the teaching of Jesus himself. Rather it was formulated within the expectations of the early Church as they were increas-

ingly influenced by apocalyptic motifs and prophecies. The other three elements, however, are all present in the teaching of the historical Jesus. The latter, his resurrection from the dead, was not strongly emphasized, however. As we noted previously, the resurrection was not an overly prominent part in his eschatology. Yet it is still something in which he believed (Mk 12:18-27) and he had this in common with the Pharisees. It was not a universally held belief in Judaism but was part of the later tradition. Jesus acknowledged his faith in the resurrection of the dead, and thus there is little reason to think that he did not look toward his own resurrection.

Jesus did not talk much about himself, and when he did, he spoke primarily of the suffering to come. Yet he had firm faith and hope in his own future vindication by God. How this would be accomplished he did not say. There is reason to believe that he himself did not know. This lack of explicit knowledge was the reason for his faith and trust in God. He felt assured that God would vindicate him even if he did not know precisely how. It was quite natural for him to assume that his vindication would involve resurrection.

Jesus' teaching about himself pertained primarily to his suffering and death. His own prophetic intuition, knowledge of Jewish history, the fate of prophets, and an awareness of the Maccabean martyrs told him he could die a martyr's or prophet's death. The untimely death of John the Baptist touched him personally as well. Jesus was well aware that he and his mission had become a source of conflict and tension. <sup>86</sup>

<sup>86</sup>This teaching from Luke is at least partially from Q. There is general consensus that Lk 12:51, 53 are Q. Manson considers the entire passage as Q, although he has some reservations about 12:49-50. Richard A. Edwards includes the passage in his concordance of Q. Lk 12:51-53 has a parallel in Mt 10:34-36. Manson suggests a parallel with Jeremiah as a prophet in similar circumstances. See the *Sayings of Jesus*, 119-21. Manson writes, "The natural shrinking from a terrible necessity, and the vision that the task must be carried out. Along with this goes the sense that the fulfillment of the mission means extreme suffering for Himself" (120). The use of "baptism" has a parallel in Mk 10:38-39 and Mt 20:22. For comment on this text, see Virgil Howard, "Did Jesus Speak About His Own Death?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 39 (1977), 515-27; also Reginald Fuller, *The Mission and Achievement of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1954), 59-62.

I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled! I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am constrained until it is accomplished! Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you but rather division: for henceforth in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three; they will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. (Lk 12:49-53)

Jesus was also aware of the fate of John, previous prophets, and of the hostility of Jerusalem in particular.<sup>87</sup>

At that very hour some Pharisees came, and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course. Nevertheless I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.' O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'" (Lk 13:31-35)

Jesus was not "taken by surprise," and there is no reason to suspect that he had not so instructed his disciples.

The most explicit references to Jesus' teaching about his fate are the suffering "son of humanity" sayings.<sup>88</sup> There is

<sup>87</sup>Luke 13:34-35 is from Q (Mt 23:37-39). See Manson, *Sayings of Jesus*, 126-28. Another reference to Jesus' acute awareness of impending danger is the parable about the man and his vineyard whose son, sent to retrieve his share of the crop, is killed (Mk 12:1-11 // Mt 21:33-43 // Lk 20:9-18).

<sup>88</sup>Mark 8:31; 9:12; 9:31; 10:33; 10:45; 14:21; 14:41; Luke 22:22; Luke 24:7; Matthew 26:2.

no reason to doubt an authenticity at the basis of these sayings, and it is that core which witnesses to Jesus' teaching about his suffering and death. The sayings reflect post-resurrection elements as well. Their core represents authentic teaching of Jesus, but teaching elaborated after the fact. We find in the sayings different levels of elaboration.

And he said to them, "Elijah does come first to restore all things; and how is it written of the Son of humanity, that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? (Mk 9:12)

But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not know him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of humanity will suffer at their hands. (Mt 17:12)

This is a very general reference on the part of Jesus to his suffering, and particularly to the suffering of rejection. There is no reason to doubt that it is based on the teaching of Jesus.

The following sayings are more specific, however. They teach both a *violent* death and the resurrection.

For he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of humanity will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he will rise." (Mk 9:31 // Mt 17:22-23 // Lk 9:44)

And he began to teach them that the Son of humanity must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. (Mk 8:31 // Mt 16:21 // Lk 9:22)

We can note the tendency to provide more information. We gradually begin to note details which reflect the after-the-fact character in some of the sayings.

Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of humanity will be delivered to the chief priests and the

scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles; and they will mock him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him; and after three days he will arise. (Mk 10:33-34 // Mt 20:18-19 // Lk 18:31-33)

The detail in the second verse (10:34) adds detail not known to Jesus but included by the Church after the fact. Notice similar specifics in Mark 14:21 (Mt 26:24; Lk 22:22) with its reference to Judas' betrayal, or in Luke 24:7 and Matthew 26:2 with reference to death by crucifixion in particular. These do not reflect the teaching of Jesus. It is the core of these sayings that Jesus taught. Manson considers Luke 17:25 as an authentic saying of Jesus which is even more basic than the passion predictions of Mark 8:31, 9:31, and 10:33-34.<sup>89</sup>

But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. (Lk 17:25)

Jeremias considers the mashal, "God will deliver up the man to men" (Mk 9:31 a) to be the ancient nucleus underlying the passion predictions.<sup>90</sup> Barnabas Lindars considers as authentic three Aramaic sayings lying underneath the formal passion predictions, namely, "the son of humanity may be delivered up," "the son of humanity goes according to his destiny," and "the son of humanity will give his life for many."<sup>91</sup> Many scholars have called the authenticity of these suffering "son of humanity" sayings into question; others have seen insufficient reason to reject them in their entirety.<sup>92</sup> Some accept Jesus' teaching about his death but

<sup>89</sup>T. W. Manson, *Sayings of Jesus*, 141-43.

<sup>90</sup>Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 282.

<sup>91</sup>See Barnabas Lindars, *Jesus Son of Man* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1983), 60-84.

<sup>92</sup>For an acceptance of some authenticity within the suffering sayings, see: Fuller, *Mission and Achievement of Jesus*, 55-58; Morna Hooker, *The Son of Man in Mark* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1967), 103-47; Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 219-21; *New Testament Theology*, 277-86. Casey, *Son of Man* (London:

not about his resurrection. But Jesus believed in resurrection and there is no reason that his vindication would not involve this. Even reference to resurrection after three days could have been the teaching of Jesus.<sup>93</sup>

### *Jesus and the Sapiential Tradition*

Jesus, prophet and sage, is best understood not only in the context of ancient prophecy but also in the context of the sapiential tradition in ancient Israel and Judaism. From the start we must make a distinction between Jesus as a teacher in history influenced by the wisdom tradition, and what is called a wisdom Christology in the New Testament, namely, an interpretation of the person and mission of Christ in terms of Hebrew wisdom or as an incarnation of a pre-existent Wisdom.<sup>94</sup> Wisdom Christology is not our concern here. Neither his disciples nor Jesus himself saw him as an incarnation of such wisdom. Rather, Jesus as a teacher of wisdom is our concern.

Israel's wisdom tradition is not an easily definable or precise tradition.<sup>95</sup> The history of wisdom (*hokmah*) varies

SPCK, 1979), 232-37, isolates the predictions because of their extensive secondary development and hence resists classification as either authentic *or* inauthentic. He does consider, however, Mark 9:12, 10:45, and 14:21 as authentic (236), and others do have an authentic saying of Jesus in their background but a background which may have been a fairly general statement about how people will die and rise (232-33). But that may be how Jesus in fact did predict his death (233).

<sup>93</sup>See Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 285-6. Also see, H.K. McArthur, "On the Third Day," *New Testament Studies* 18 (1971-72), 81-86.

<sup>94</sup>For further discussion of wisdom Christology itself, see James D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), 163-209. Also *Aspects Of Wisdom in Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Robert Wilken (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975). William A. Beardslee, "The Wisdom Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels," *Journal Of the American Academy Of Religion* 35 (1967), 231-40.

<sup>95</sup>One of the best collections of essays on this topic is *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, selected by James L. Crenshaw (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1976), 46-60 for ample bibliography. For an introduction to the wisdom tradition, see Walter Brueggemann, *In Man We Trust* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1972); Dermot Cox, "Introduction to Sapiential Literature," *Proverbs* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1982); James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*

in its post-exilic, pre-exilic, and pre-monarchic phases. One must also distinguish between wisdom itself, the wisdom movement, and the wisdom literature. <sup>96</sup> The literature (Proverbs, Qoheleth, Job, Sirach, and Wisdom of Solomon) is post-exilic and includes a variety of forms of wisdom. The movement, however, has a much longer history, going back through the monarchy, with its own distinctive relationship to the prophetic movement, and possibly to the court and king. Solomon and his court may have given a particular impetus to the cultivation of wisdom in Israel, and yet wisdom itself as a way of thinking and mastering the world had its roots not only in days prior to the monarchy but also outside of Israel itself. Thus wisdom pre-dates even Israel, manifests itself as a distinctive movement or tradition within the history of Israel's monarchy, and becomes a written literature after the exile and after the quenching of the prophetic voice.

Israel's wisdom reflected the international character of wisdom and yet was appropriated and particularized; it was not only wisdom technically speaking, it was "Israelite" wisdom.<sup>97</sup> Yet, of all Israel's traditions, none was more under the influence of the nations, more representative of an international movement, less capable of being studied apart from its Near Eastern counterparts in Babylonia and especially Egypt. However, Israel's wisdom did not just manifest an international flavor; it became more and more integrated

(Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981); or R.B.Y. Scott, *The Way of Wisdom in the Old Testament* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1971). Specialized treatments include Roland Murphy, "The Interpretation of Old Testament Wisdom Literature," *Interpretation* 23 (1969), 289-301; Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, trans. James D. Masters (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978); J.C. Rylaarsdam, *Revelation in Jewish Wisdom Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946); R.N. Whybray, *The Intellectual Tradition in the Old Testament* (New York: de Gruyter, 1974).

<sup>96</sup> See especially, J.L. Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence Upon 'Historical' Literature," *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, esp. 482-87.

<sup>97</sup> See J.L. Crenshaw, "Prolegomenon," *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, 4-9; R.B.Y. Scott, "Solomon and the Beginnings of Wisdom in Israel," *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, 84-101.

with Israel's faith and institutions. Late wisdom shows the influence of Hellenism as well, yet wisdom at this period is also seen as God's gift manifested in the Torah.

Both the literature and the tradition manifest different kinds of wisdom: from the knowledge of nature to a popular, practical, proverbial understanding of life; from folk wisdom to the monarchy's juridical, political, pragmatic conduct of affairs of state; from the wisdom of family and court to a more reflective, speculative, academic, intellectual, and even critical or skeptical wisdom; from a purely secular to profoundly religious and even theological wisdom; from home-taught wisdom to the wisdom of the "schools," or a scribal wisdom, a wisdom of the sage.<sup>98</sup> Most wisdom tended to be, however, experiential and existential in character.

A much disputed question is whether "the wise" in Israel's history ever formed something like a recognizable or distinct social group. Whybray has argued that there is no proof for "the existence of any class of persons in Israel whose specific designation was the wise men; or any profession which was distinguished from others by the name *hokma*"<sup>99</sup> Although kings maintained a body of advisors and administrators during the time of the monarchy, as a social or professional group they were not identified as the *hâkamîm*. Nor were teachers as a profession so identified. Even evidence for the existence of schools with professional teachers is conclusive only for later post-exilic times. Likewise there is no evidence for a class of writers to whom the

<sup>98</sup>O. N. Whybray, "Different Kinds of Wisdom," in Dermot Cox, *Proverbs*, 30-57; J. L. Crenshaw, "Prolegomenon," 3-5, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence Upon 'Historical' Literature," *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, 482-84; George Fohrer, "Sophia," *Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vii (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971), esp. 480-83; Berend Gemser, "The Spiritual Structure of Biblical Aphoristic Wisdom," *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, 208-19; Robert Gordis, "Quotations in Wisdom Literature," *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, esp. 220-22; von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 3-150, 287-319. Also see Whybray, *The Intellectual Tradition in the Old Testament*.

<sup>99</sup>R. N. Whybray, 13. Crenshaw, however, does speak of the wise as being a professional class. See *Old Testament Wisdom*, 28-42.

expression "the wise" would refer, although there were "scribes" with varying functions throughout Israel's history. 100

Although the wisdom tradition does not lead one to identify a particular social or professional class, like priests and kings, there were nevertheless "intellectuals" and an "intellectual tradition." The sage was an identifiable person and sages were distinguishable from the prophets, although less identifiable as a group and less institutionalized than the priests and kings. The prophets and sages are distinguishable, but not categorically so. Isaiah and also Amos have been suggested as prophets who exemplify the tradition of wisdom. And although prophecy and its classical expression had ceased, the book of Job manifests a new prophetic spirit in its critical wisdom. 101 The authority of both came from God (Jer 8:8-9; Ex 7:7-26). Yet prophecy and wisdom were distinguishable gifts in Israel's history, and the prophet and sage distinguishable persons.

Prophecy was frequently critical of the political wisdom of the court (Is 31:1-3; Jer 8:8-9). In a classic example, Jeremiah was the enemy of the priest, the sage, and the other prophets. Each had, to some degree, their own sphere of authority. 102

Then they said, "Come, let us make plots against Jeremiah, for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor

100Whybray, 15-54.

101For further consideration of the relation between wisdom and prophecy, see Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader*, 47-48. Amos and Isaiah have been studied from the viewpoint of wisdom. Johannes Fichtner, "Isaiah among the Wise," *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, 429-438. Samuel Terrien, "Amos and Wisdom," *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, 448-455.

102Whybray, 24-31, is hesitant to read too much into the text of Jeremiah 18:18. Yet we must maintain a balance between seeing "the wise" as a specific, identifiable, professional class and seeing them as not at all distinguishable. The reality probably lies between; the term has a referent obviously, but not necessarily to a particular class. Likewise we must keep in mind that the referent changes and perhaps dramatically at different periods in Israel's history. In Jeremiah 18:18 and elsewhere Jeremiah is critical of the prophets as well. Thus there is a difference between prophets and prophets, as there are between sage and sage. Cf. Alexander Di Lella, "Conservative and Progressive Theology: Sirach and Wisdom," *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, 401-16.

counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not heed any of his words." (Jer 18:18)

So there did exist in Israel's history a sapiential or intellectual tradition alongside the prophetic and priestly traditions. All of these traditions were highly affected by the leap from monarchy to post-exilic Judaism. Wisdom was characterized by its own way of handing on the tradition, of instructing the young, educating court advisors, teaching the people, or raising critical questions about the tradition. Like the prophet, the sage could be an establishment voice or a critical, "prophetic" voice. Not all the prophets or companies of prophets were prophetic voices in the sense that Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah had been. So likewise the sage could represent the status quo, or political shrewdness, or reform and the development of tradition.

To what degree was Jesus influenced by this wisdom tradition? To what degree was he representative of it? A significant aspect of the ministry of Jesus was his teaching. He was a prophetic preacher, charismatic healer and exorcist. He was also a teacher, and as a teacher he was concerned with instruction. His teaching had authority and it was validated by his deeds. In what sense then can we say that this teacher was a "teacher of wisdom"?

It is well recognized today that the forms within which Jesus taught were wisdom forms, such as the beatitude, the parable, the proverb. We have distinguished most of Jesus' teaching according to form into parables and sayings. The sayings often have a proverbial character. In that sense the teachings of Jesus consist primarily of parables and proverbs, the language and teaching forms of Israel's sages.

James Robinson has pointed out that the term *proverb* is the term used to describe sayings within the wisdom tradition.<sup>103</sup> Sometimes the wisdom literature itself refers to its

<sup>103</sup> James M. Robinson, "Logoi Sophon: On the Gattung of Q," *Trajectories Through Early Christianity*, ed. Robinson and Koester (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 71-113, esp. 103-13.

proverbs as "sayings of the wise" (Eccl 12:11; Prv 22:17). In fact, the literary genre of a "sayings collection" was associated with the sages, the *sophoi*, the *hâkamîm*. Is it only coincidence then that the earliest teachings of Jesus have come to us from his disciples as a sayings collection, something of a book of proverbs, of wisdom, of instruction, both eschatological and ethical in character? Robinson suggests that the literary genre to which Q belongs is that of *logoi sophon*, "sayings of sages," or "words of the wise"<sup>104</sup> Thus it appears that the very form in which Jesus taught would have associated him with the wisdom tradition, an eschatological teacher of truth, wisdom, righteousness.

In our efforts to understand Jesus as one of Judaism's sages, we still have no better guide than the discussion by Bultmann about Jesus as a teacher of wisdom in his *History of the Synoptic Tradition*.<sup>105</sup> Bultmann divides the sayings of Jesus in the Synoptics into three main groups according to the content: wisdom sayings, prophetic sayings, and legal sayings. The first of these three groups concerns us here. Bultmann includes sixty-nine sayings from the Synoptic material in his discussion of the wisdom logia. Using his own critical principles, he concludes that sixteen of these can be ascribed to Jesus.<sup>106</sup> Although some may argue for other sayings as being genuine, we can at least accept Bultmann's suggestion as a minimum. These sayings are Mark 3:24-6; 3:27; 7:15; 8:35; 10:15; 10:23b; 10:25; 10:31; Luke 9:60a; 9:62; 14:11; 16:15; Matthew 5:39b; 5:44-48; 7:13-14; 22:14.

To observe the similarity in form between the teaching of Jesus and the proverbial wisdom of the Hebrew Scriptures, we can contrast the character of Jesus' teaching through exhortation (Lk 9:60a; Mt 7:13-14) and exhortations in the

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*, 71-75, 103-13.

<sup>105</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. John Marsh (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963), 69-108.

<sup>106</sup>*Ibid.*, 105. These constitute Perrin's list of proverbial sayings, *Jesus and the Language*, 41. For Perrin's discussion of these sayings, see 48-54. Also see W.A. Beardslee, "Uses of the Proverb in the Synoptic Gospels," *Interpretation* 24 (1970), 61-76.

Hebrew Scriptures (e.g. Prv 1:8; 3:11), which exhortations are in the imperative. Or we can contrast Jesus' teaching using the declarative form (Mk 3:24-26; 7:15; Lk 9:62; 14:11; Mt 22:14 - twelve of Bultmann's sixteen sayings are declarative) and declarations in the Hebrew Scriptures (Sirach 6:15; 13:1; 28:17; Prv 3:13; 15:16; 15:17). Although the history of the tradition usually combined originally separate sayings (such as the three sayings of Mk 8:34-37), or added a new saying to one already in circulation (contrast Mk 9:43-47 with Mt 5:29-30), or changed a saying for some linguistic or dogmatic motive, we still have genuine material which reflects proverbial wisdom. It is even possible that Jesus took a popular proverb and used it for his own purposes. The proverbs and parables of Jesus represent his most genuine teaching. Sayings which come from the period of the early Church simply fit into the teaching style of Jesus himself.

Jesus' wisdom was not only proverbial, it was expressed in a concrete, experiential, figurative, imaginative language. The language of the parables is also the language of wisdom. The general principle in Matthew 5:39-41 is amplified by concrete examples, and we notice this same concreteness in Matthew 5:44-48. This concreteness may sometimes even be hyperbole (Mt 5:39-41). The teaching of Jesus contains **paradox** (Mk 8:35; 10:25; Lk 9:60a). Jesus' parables (and the parable was a form of instruction developed in the wisdom tradition) contain images, metaphors, and examples.

We ought also mention Jesus' sense of humor or appreciation of the comical.<sup>107</sup> Laughter was to be one of the characteristics of life in the reign of God. Jesus seems to have enjoyed himself - think of the times he is found at a party or someone's house for dinner, or a number of parables which use a wedding celebration as the setting or point of comparison. Heaven is like a feast.

<sup>107</sup> For a valuable discussion of the humor of Jesus, see Jakob Jonsson, *Humour and Irony in the New Testament* (Reykjavik: Bokautgafa Menningarsjods, 1965), esp. 90-199 on the Synoptics and on Jesus.

The first thing the father thought of doing for his returning son was throw a feast, almost as if that is what Jesus would have thought of doing. He must have been a joy to be with and fun to have around. He could be the utterly serious prophet of the wilderness but also the master of the art of teaching with wit.

Think of the "types" of whom Jesus spoke, for example the Pharisee and publican at prayer (Lk 18:9-14). There is humor in the story of the "widow who makes life intolerable for the judge" (Lk 18:1-8). We see not only his love of the concrete and the use of hyperbole but also his appreciation of the comic and incongruous as we try to picture the man with a beam in his eye (Mt 7:3 // Lk 6:41), or people coming to see an aristocrat in royal dress in the desert (Mt 11:7-8), or the foolish virgins (Mt 25:1-12).

Jesus even described himself as a groom, and a groom at a wedding feast or on the wedding night is hardly somber or serious. Jesus was not "like a mourner at a wedding feast."<sup>108</sup> His sense of joy could not be contained; now is no time to fast. His sense of the comic enabled him to teach by using the ordinary situations of life and making a point from them. His prayer and ministry were complemented by a sense of humor which often served an educational purpose. People enjoyed Jesus' company, and remembered his stories.

Jesus' teaching and preaching exemplify both prophetic and sapiential forms and content. Jesus was both preacher and teacher, both prophet and sage. He respected both traditions of Israel. We noted early, as we began our discussion of Jesus as a teacher, that there need be no conflict between being both prophet and teacher. We also noticed in the traditions the difficulty of clearly delineating prophecy and wisdom at every point. So in Jesus we see a prophet who has taken to himself much from the tradition of the wise. There is nothing incompatible about the blend. "Jesus as a 'teacher' using so-called 'wisdom' forms, and Jesus as an 'eschatological charismatic' or 'messianic' prophet, are in no

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 144.

sense contraries; the reverse is true: each conditions the other, the unheard-of, revolutionary content of Jesus' message sought the stamp and polish of an established form. "109 Given the challenging and critical character of both prophecy and later wisdom, both are suited to Jesus' charismatic ministry to Judaism. The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord, and the mission of the prophet is the word of the Lord: the Lord was and remained the starting point for Jesus in his prayer, preaching, healing and teaching.

At the same time that we speak about the influence of Israel's wisdom tradition on Jesus and of Jesus as a teacher of wisdom, we must be careful not to subsume him simply under a category. As a prophet Jesus was a late prophet, yet not like the latter day apocalypticists, more like the prophets of old, though not simply a repeat of Isaiah or Jeremiah. Jesus was an individual, a messenger of God who combined in his own way or defined in his own way what it was for him to be a prophet. He was not just "one of the prophets." So likewise with respect to the varied and developing wisdom tradition. Jesus was not just a teacher or sage like others. He individualized wisdom and exemplified it in his own personal way. Thus he was not simply "a teacher of wisdom" as a teacher who may have been associated with a school, nor "one of the scribes" affiliated with the Pharisees, nor yet one of the rabbis, in the sense that the word would have before long in Judaism, nor an apocalyptic seer who relied upon visions and whose authority was associated with one of Israel's ancestors. In the end Jesus was Jesus. Wisdom like prophecy helps us to understand Jesus, but even here he remains enigmatic. For many he was simply "The Teacher," but a prophetic and itinerant teacher. Jesus was known for his wisdom as much as for his mighty deeds.

And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there, and coming to his own country he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were aston-

ished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?" (Mt 13:53-54)

At Caesarea Philippi, when Jesus asked how people perceived him the disciples responded with the fact that Jesus was seen as a prophet (Mk 8:27-33). The Gospels reflect, however, that Jesus was also seen in the tradition of Solomonic wisdom. Whether historically accurate or not, Solomon had long been associated with Israel's wisdom tradition as its chief exemplification.<sup>10</sup>

And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and largeness of mind like the sand on the seashore, so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the nations round about. He also uttered three thousand proverbs; and his songs were a thousand and five. He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the the wall; he spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish. And men came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom. (1 Kings 4:29-34)

Yet the assessment of Jesus was that he was not only greater than the prophets; he was also greater than Solomon. He was seen by way of contrast to both traditions. Jesus is pictured in the New Testament as greater than Jonah, greater than Elijah, and even greater than Moses. Depending upon how one interprets this greater, there is reason to believe that Jesus may himself have held

<sup>10</sup>See James Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 42-65; R.B.Y. Scott, "Solomon and the Beginnings of Wisdom in Israel," *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, 84-101.

this view. He may have referred to himself as greater than Jonah. And he spoke with an authority equal to that of Moses in giving the Law. Jesus is also pictured as greater than Solomon.

The men of Nineveh will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. (Mt 12:38-42 // Lk 11:29-32)

The understanding of Jesus in the light of the tradition of the wisdom of Solomon is early and shows, if not Jesus' self-understanding, certainly the impression he made on others. Not only was Jesus seen as being like the prophets, but also like *the* sage, Solomon himself. Jesus, the prophet, was also a compassionate sage, the Teacher from Galilee.