

DISCIPLES, OUTSIDERS, AND THE SECRET
OF THE KINGDOM:
Interpreting Mark 4:10-13

by

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PREFACE

The investigation undertaken in these pages had its beginnings in a college class in religion about ten years ago. The exact situation has been forgotten, but a pointed comment upon Mark 4:11-12 by Professor J.S. Engle of Otterbein College caused the passage to stand out in the writer's mind. Until recently it remained something incomprehensible and therefore something of which to beware. A continuing interest in the parables of Jesus was constantly threatened by the apparent meaning of this passage. Then came the opportunity and encouragement to pursue a detailed study, and what follows here is the result.

The writer wishes to express appreciation to several persons who have assisted in the preparation of this thesis: First of all to Dr. George Johnston, Professor of New Testament in the McGill Faculty of Divinity, who as supervisor gave guidance, stimulus to thought, and encouragement in the pursuit of the investigation contained in these pages; to Dean Stanley B. Frost and Dr. J. A. Boorman who made their counsel frequently available during the year of graduate study in which this thesis was undertaken; to Miss Vivian Hunter, librarian at Divinity Hall, and to her

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to answer the following question: Did the saying about disciples, outsiders, and the mystery of the Kingdom of God originate with Jesus; and if so, what did he intend by it? Phrased in another fashion, this inquiry concerns the authenticity and meaning of Mark 4:11-12. In reality there are two questions, but the latter grows out of the former if the former receives an affirmative answer. Even if the question about authenticity were to receive a negative answer, the investigator would find it necessary to account for the saying, its meaning, and intention, though of course these would not then be ascribed to Jesus.

The saying, like all the utterances of Jesus preserved for us, is found in a context. In Mark, the episode of which 4:11-12 is an integral part is set forth as Jesus' own explanation for his use of parables. This in turn is part of the collection of parables and figurative sayings which constitutes the greater portion of the fourth chapter of Mark. In each of the Synoptic parallels, Matthew 13 and Luke 8, a version of the same episode and saying occurs. In general, it may be said that in Matthew 13

the larger context, the immediate context, and the saying itself are expanded, while in Luke all three are presented in briefer form than in Mark. Matthew and Luke agree with Mark in presenting this saying as Jesus' reason for using parables.

Problems arise immediately if one takes at face value what the evangelists report. First of all, if Mark 4:11-12 means what it appears to mean then it has a bearing on the understanding and interpretation of Jesus' parables throughout the Synoptic tradition. According to this saying some, at least, of the parables were deliberate attempts by Jesus to keep certain hearers from understanding his meaning. A second and more inclusive difficulty is the apparently explicit statement of Jesus that his purpose was to prevent some people from knowing and understanding and ultimately from being forgiven. Questions about language arise at two points especially, for neither "mystery" nor "outsiders" is found elsewhere in Jesus' sayings.

This preliminary statement of several difficulties presented by the passage implies certain objectives in addition to the primary aim. Among them is the attainment of a satisfactory understanding of the terms which cause special problems, as well as a better understanding of the more familiar expressions that Jesus used. Certain theological categories are naturally involved--Revelation, Pre-destination, Free-will, the Nature of God--to mention a

few.

One major objective is to find out what has been said previously about Mark 4:10ff. and its parallels. A survey-inquiry of this sort serves two ends: from a historical standpoint it brings together in one place much of what has been said on the matter; secondly, for a critical approach to the passage under investigation, it assembles some of the materials with which we need to work. The primary materials are, of course, the Biblical texts themselves.

This brings us to a statement of method. The presentation is in two main parts; historical survey and exegesis. A brief concluding section deals with some of the issues raised by the investigation. The survey is not intended to be exhaustive but so far as I am aware no significant interpretation of Mark 4:11-12 or its parallels in the Synoptics has been overlooked.

It is well-known that Matthew's was the most popular Gospel in the Ancient Church. The search for interpretations of our passage among the writings of the Church Fathers corroborated this. Most often it is the Matthean version with which they work. To ascertain the relative frequency with which the three Synoptic Gospels are quoted, I selected the works of Augustine in the Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (First Series, Vols. I-VIII)

and counted the references to each Gospel in the Scriptural indexes. In approximate numbers the totals for the eight volumes are:

Matthew	--	2000
Mark	--	200
Luke	--	800

This is a ratio of 10 to 1 to 4. Whether Augustine's writings are completely representative or not, they do at least illustrate the practice of the ancient Church.

In each chapter (or chapter division) of the survey the order followed is historical, according to the period in which a writer lived in the first two chapters, and according to the date of publication in the third. The few departures from this procedure are given brief explanation in the text, or are self-explanatory.

In Part II, the exegetical examination of the terms and language is conducted with a view to ascertaining what can be known about the theological "raw-materials" available to Jesus and the people of his day. What terminology and language were current, how were they used, and what did they mean? At the same time Jesus' own use of these materials is examined and evaluated.

Repeated reference is made to the Qumran Literature in Chapter IV. Prevailing scholarly opinion (though not unanimous) at the present time favours the dating of the

Qumran writings in the first two centuries preceding the Christian era. In this view, the Qumran writings are a part of the body of literature covered by the term "intertestamental." The Old Testament in its original Hebrew and Septuagint translation, together with the intertestamental literature, constitute the field within which an inquiry of this sort takes place. If the Qumran Literature is a part of this field then it must be taken into consideration. Similarities of thought, language, and terminology may be instructive and relevant therefore, though a certain amount of reserve and caution must be exercised.

P A R T O N E

A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE
INTERPRETATION OF THE PASSAGE

CHAPTER I
IN THE ANCIENT CHURCH

In the Early Church document known as the Shepherd of Hermas (about 160 A.D.) a conversation takes place between Hermas and the "shepherd" who appears to him. Hermas has just heard a similitude from his instructor. The similitude, which speaks of a field, a master, a vineyard and a slave, is designed to communicate something to him. Hermas, however, is puzzled by it, and asks for an explanation, because it is to him a "parable." He says:

"If you speak parables to me and do not unfold them, I shall have heard your words in vain."

Then comes the following reply:

"Every one who is a servant of God, and has his Lord in his heart, asks of Him understanding and receives it, and opens up every parable; and the words of the Lord become known to him which are spoken in parables."¹

Presumably this passage from Hermas may be regarded not only as applying to the "similitudes" which the writer was witnessing, but also as reflecting the concern of the early church to understand some of the

¹Hermas, Sim. V, iv, 3.

teaching of its Lord. It is significant that the word "parables" is the specific term used to designate the matters that needed to be "opened up."

Contemporary with or slightly earlier than Hermas,² The Gnostic Gospel of Thomas employed a saying about "mystery" which may in some way be related to Mark 4:11 and its parallels. In the text and translation established by Guilaumont and his colleagues the first part of logion 62 reads:

Jesus said: "I tell my mysteries [to those who are worthy of my] mysteries."

The words in brackets are a conjectural restoration of the text, and without them the saying is regarded by Grant and Freedman³ as too fragmentary to warrant more than simply noting that it calls to mind the Synoptic saying. The context gives no assistance in understanding what the saying may have meant, since the Gospel of Thomas joins one saying to another with no attempt at application. No doubt "mystery" referred to some aspect of secret knowledge which the Gnostics believed they possessed.

Among the Church Fathers, perhaps the earliest reference to the Synoptic passage being investigated here

²A date of 140 A.D. is suggested in A. Guilaumont, et.al., (trans.), The Gospel According to Thomas, (New York: Harper & Bros. 1959), p. vi.

³R.M. Grant with D.N. Freedman, The Secret Sayings of Jesus, (Garden City, Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1960), p. 168.

is to be found in the writings of Irenaeus (120-202 A.D.). In Book I of Against Heresies Irenaeus discusses the teaching and practice of the Carpocratians. This sect, he tells us, maintained that their doctrines could be traced back to Jesus himself. They appealed to a combination of Mark 4:11 and 4:34, holding that "Jesus spoke in a mystery to his disciples and apostles" and that these close followers received permission to pass on to other worthy and believing persons the secret teaching which they received.⁴

Later in the same piece of writing, Irenaeus refutes the Marcionite argument that God was the author of sin because he blinded Pharoah and his servants. Irenaeus quotes Matthew 13:13ff. and follows it with an explanation. The same God who blesses some inflicts blindness upon those who do not believe. This is similar to the action of the sun, which, as one of God's created things, is a cause of blindness to those with weak eyes, but a source of illumination to those who see well. So to those who believe in Him, God grants fuller understanding. God knows those who will not believe, has given them over to their unbelief, and has turned his face away from them. They are thereby left in the darkness which they have chosen for themselves. Irenaeus quotes Romans 1:28 ("Since they did

⁴Irenaeus, Against Heresies, I, xxv, 5.

not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base mind and to improper conduct.") in support and explanation of his argument. Pharaoh never would have believed. Therefore he was given up to unbelief. Jesus spoke in parables and brought blindness upon Israel, because he knew the unbelief that was in them. The case of Pharaoh's hardening and the fact that Jesus taught in parables are thus mutually explanatory of each other, and are instances of a similar divine action.⁵

Like Hermas, Irenaeus witnesses to the problem of interpretation faced by the early church. Parables, especially, are singled out as points which admit of many interpretations. But those who love the truth will readily acknowledge that God is to be known from what is "certain, indubitable, and true," that is, the scripture passages which are not liable to ambiguity.⁶

Irenaeus used Matthew 13:13 in his defence of the character of God. Tertullian (145-220) makes use of Matthew 13:11 to defend the validity of the apostolic transmission of the faith. The apostles were in fact, he affirms, adequately taught by the Lord, as scripture shows. No one in his right mind could suppose that Jesus left the Apostles ignorant of any necessary thing. He kept them in

⁵Ibid., IV, xxix.

⁶Ibid., II, xxvii, 3.

close association with himself. When they were alone, he would expound all things (Mark 4:34) which were obscure. He told them that "to them it was given to know the mysteries" which others were not permitted to understand. And surely nothing was withheld from Peter, the rock on which the church should be built! So reasons Tertullian in his Prescription against Heretics.⁷

In another writing, On the Resurrection of the Flesh, Tertullian maintains that Jesus spoke to the Jews in parables. If he spoke also to the disciples in such a manner, he either explained the parable or made its express application clear. Parables were used only when addressing a particular class--the Jews. This was done for the reason given in Matthew 13:13, in order to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah.⁸

Tertullian's observation that Jesus explained parables to his disciples is, in general, correct. That he spoke parables primarily to the Jews is readily seen not to be true, as a classification according to audience shows. But Tertullian, of course, was arguing to prove a point, not as one who expected that his readers would turn to their own copies of the New Testament to check his facts!

Clement of Alexandria (d. 220) introduces his

⁷Tertullian, Prescription Against Heretics, XXII.

⁸Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh, XXXIII.

Stromata as a piece of "instruction" for the readers. In support of his contention that "knowledge is not for everyone, yet written compositions are for the many," Clement appeals to Matthew 13:13. In explaining these words of Jesus, he cautions that it would be impious to think that Jesus caused the ignorance of his hearers. Rather, he prophetically exposed the ignorance that was in them, saying that they would not understand the things that he spoke.⁹

In Book V of the Stromata, a portion of which deals with the use of symbols, the symbolic style of writing, and mystic meanings, Clement discusses the veiled nature of the "mysteries of the faith." Only those who are wise and understanding and who love their Lord will understand "the Lord's parable." Not many comprehend these things. In this connection, Clement says that Jesus spoke the saying "My mystery is to me, and to the sons of my house." By this saying, which Clement says is found in "a gospel" Jesus assures his followers of their status.¹⁰

In chapter twelve of the same book Clement speaks of the difficulty of discovering, understanding, and knowing the Maker of the Universe. Words are inadequate to describe and explain Him. The adequate explanations, he

⁹Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, I, i.

¹⁰Ibid., V., x.

reasons, ought to be concealed. Among the scripture passages quoted in confirmation of this is Matthew 13:11, words of the Saviour himself. That Jesus spoke the "word in a mystery" to the Apostles is also clear from the prophecy (Psalm 78:2) quoted in Matthew 13:35. "He will open his mouth in parables, and will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world." (In his argument, Clement disregards the fact that in Matthew this is said of Jesus after his teaching in parables to the crowds, not to the disciples.) In addition, the parable of the leaven shows concealment. The leaven is hidden in the meal. So the soul is saved through the "spirituall power hidden in it by faith;...the power of the word...draws to itself secretly and invisibly every one who receives it."¹¹ Thus, for Clement, the mysteries of the Kingdom and the fact of their concealment have to do on the one hand with the Divine Nature, and on the other with the permeation of the world by the Divine purpose.

The Clementine Homilies (or Pseudo-Clementines) purport to be by the Roman church father who lived near the close of the first century. They are, however, to be dated about 200-250. At one point¹² a discussion concerning wicked actions between the figures Peter and Simon leads

¹¹Ibid., V, xii.

¹²Clementine Homilies, Homily XIX, ~~xx~~.

into a further discussion about pain and death as the results of sin. Simon asks to know the truth about the "wicked one." In reply, Peter answers that the Lord commanded, "Keep the mysteries for me and the sons of my house." This is why Jesus explained the mysteries of the Kingdom in private to his disciples. It is therefore impious to state hidden truths to Simon in the present argument, since he is not a sincere seeker, but an opponent of the truth. Though this is the situation, Peter says he will give a reply in order that the audience of listeners may not suppose that he is simply making an excuse not to answer Simon's question.

The point is that in his hesitancy to answer Simon's inquiry Peter appeals to the apparent practice of Jesus and to the apparent implication of the secrecy sayings. The answer concerning the "truth about the wicked one" is a mystery reserved for the "sons of the house" and is not to be given to outsiders like Simon.

Origen (185-254) produced a commentary on the Gospel according to Matthew, but the part which included his comments on Matt. 13:11ff. has perished. Fortunately, in the part that remains he refers three times to that passage. His basic position is that Jesus used parables only with the crowds and never with the disciples. For Origen, a parable is a type of utterance intended to conceal a meaning. The utterance about the treasure hidden in the field (13:44) was addressed to disciples. It is a

"similitude," however, and not a "parable." Parables were for those outside--those to whom "it is not given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." A similitude differs from a parable as is shown by Mark 4:30. "Similitude" is generic; "parable" is specific. Similitude includes parable; it is the highest genus of parable. Parable is a species of similitude. Origen rests content that this proves his point and says no more.¹³

When writing on Matthew 13:53-54 Origen expresses his fear that these words may be taken to imply that Jesus spoke parables to his disciples also. But since the disciples were not "without" and parables were used only with those who were "without," it is readily seen that Jesus did not speak in parables to his disciples.¹⁴

Matthew 14:22 offers Origen the opportunity to point out the difference between crowds and disciples. Again he cites Matthew 13:11, for it shows that those who know the mysteries are called "disciples," while those to whom such a privilege is not given are called "multitudes." According to 13:36 the disciples go into the house with Jesus, but the multitudes are dismissed.¹⁵

In Book III of De Principiis, Origen brings up for examination certain passages of scripture which seem to

¹³Origen, Commentary on Matthew, X, iv.

¹⁴Ibid., X, xvi.

¹⁵Ibid., XI, iv.

nullify the notion of free-will. Among these is Mark 4:12-- "the answer which the Saviour returns to those who inquired why He spake to the multitude in parables." (Evidently Origen has in mind the Matthean setting and the Marcan version of the saying). He notes that if it were not for the final phrase, "Lest they should be converted and their sins be forgiven them," it would be fairly simple to answer those who argue from the passage that men do not have free will concerning their salvation or destruction. Without this phrase, one could say that Jesus simply did not want those who were not to become good and virtuous to understand the more mystical portions of his teaching. So he spoke in parables. But the final phrase makes the defense of the passage more difficult.

Origen does not shrink before the difficulty. He maintains that sometimes a rapid cure is not to the advantage of those who are healed. He who is easily cured of a dangerous disease may think little of the serious evil involved, and so not be on guard against falling into it a second time. So God, who knows everything, delays in sending such persons a "quick cure" and in helping them does not help them, "the latter course being to their advantage." Origen reasons that Jesus foresaw in those "without" persons who were not likely to be constant and steady followers. Thus by the use of a teaching method which kept them from a

clear understanding of the deeper things of his teaching, they were kept from a rapid conversion after which

being healed by obtaining remission of sins, they should despise the wounds of their wickedness, as being slight and easy of healing, and should again speedily relapse into them... And perhaps also... being abandoned by the divine superintendence, and being filled to a greater degree by their own evils which they had sown, they may afterwards be called to a more stable repentance.

With this dexterous argument¹⁶ Origen seeks to persuade his readers that the puzzling passage does not exclude free-will, but rather that it sets forth the Divine method to ensure effective and lasting exercise of the will.

In the Dialogue with Heraclides¹⁷ Origen is asked to explain a difficult theological question--whether or not the soul of man is blood. The question is based upon the LXX text of Leviticus 17:11. Origen introduces his reply with an explanation of his hesitancy to reply. He hesitates because he does not want to cast theological pearls before "swine." Such, he states, are present at the discussion in which he is engaged. He reminds his audience that Jesus knew how to distinguish between hearers who were "within" and hearers who were "without." To those outside he spoke

¹⁶Origen, De Principiis, III, i, 16-17.

¹⁷Origen, "Dialogue with Heraclides," Alexandrian Christianity, ed. by J.E.L. Oulton and H. Chadwick, Vol. II: Library of Christian Classics, (London: S.C.M. Press, 1954), pp. 447-448.

in parables. Afterward he explained the parables to those who "entered into his house." Thus a mystical meaning is involved in "entering the house" or "staying outside." The sinner is outside. The true disciple enters Jesus' house. "Within" and "without" are thus seen to be spiritual terms.

In this discussion, Origen seems to have both Mark 4:11 and Matthew 13:36 in mind. Though obviously he is not attempting an exegesis of these passages, we can see how he understands them, at least in so far as they serve his immediate purpose.

A similar employment of this theme occurs in Against Celsus¹⁸. Here Origen says that the full meaning of the parables was reserved for those who had gone beyond the state of exoteric teaching, and came to Jesus privately. Previously (in chapter xix), Origen quoted I Cor. 2:6-8 ("The wisdom of God is a mystery") concerning advanced Christian teaching. This matter is still in mind in chapter xxi, and while there is no explicit linking of the "mystery" in Mark 4:11 with the "mystery" in I Cor. 2:7, it is evident that Origen understood the private teaching of Jesus to his disciples to be concerned with the "inner mysteries of the Church of God."

To Cyril of Jerusalem we are indebted for the preservation of a fragment from the argument of Archelaus

¹⁸Origen, Against Celsus, III, xxi.

with a heretic named Manes. Archelaus was bishop of Caschar (?) in Mesopotamia about A.D. 277 when the argument is supposed to have taken place. Manes rejects the God of the Old Testament because He "is an inventor of evil." For example, Paul says that he "blinds the minds of them that believe not" (II Cor. 4:4). Archelaus replies that it is the "lost" that have the Gospel hidden from them, as Paul maintains in the preceding sentence. Furthermore, Jesus had in mind those who do not believe when he said that he spoke to them in parables "that seeing, they may not see" (Matthew 13:13). But, Archelaus continues, it is not because he hated them that he did not want them to see. It was because of their own unworthiness--they themselves were responsible for closing their own eyes. "For wherever wickedness is a matter self-chosen, there too there is the absence of grace."¹⁹

Cyril of Jerusalem (315-386) recounts the dispute of Archelaus and Manes in his Catechetical Lectures. To his advanced class of catechumens he quotes the argument of Archelaus that the Gospel is heard by all, but only those who are Christ's know the glory of the Gospel. The parables were for those who could not hear. The disciples received private explanations of the parables. So, says Cyril in applying this to his class of catechumens, the mysteries

¹⁹Library of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. VI, p. 234.

(referred to in Matthew 13:11) are explained by the Church to those who become its members. They are not explained to the heathen. These mysteries concern the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Not even to beginning catechumens are they communicated: "But many things we often speak in a veiled way, that the believers who know may understand, and they who know not may get no hurt."²⁰

Chrysostom's Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew supply us with his interpretation of Matthew 13:10ff.²¹ He emphasizes that Jesus' reply, "to them it is not given," is not to be regarded as arbitrary, but implies that men are the authors of their own evils. It represents the thing given as a grace bestowed. It does not follow, however, that, because knowledge of the mysteries of the Kingdom is a gift, free-will is thereby taken away. When told "it is given," the one sort of hearer should not despair, nor should the other grow careless. The beginning (of knowing the mysteries) is with ourselves. When he deals with Matthew 13:13, Chrysostom sets up an imaginary objector who asks whether it would not have been better to open the eyes of people who were blind, rather than to speak so that they would not understand. Chrysostom agrees that it would have been better, if their blindness were not voluntary and

²⁰Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures VI, 23-29.

²¹Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, Homily XLV.

self-chosen. But the blindness is of their own wickedness, as is signified by the phrase: "seeing, they see not." They do see, but they choose not to see. They saw devils cast out and gave the credit to Beelzebub. At the beginning of his ministry Jesus spoke plainly, but because the people "perverted themselves" he turned to the use of parables. The quotation from Isaiah is introduced to repeat what Jesus has already said. It accuses them with the same accuracy. It describes their "aggravated wickedness and their determined defection" from him. But Jesus said these words to draw the people to him, to provoke them, and to show them that if they would turn to him he would heal them. Their conversion was still possible, and if they would repent they would still be saved.

If this last were not true, Chrysostom maintains, Jesus should have kept silent and not even uttered parables to stir up the interest of the people. Significantly, he quotes Ezek. 18:23: "For God willeth not the death of the sinner, but that he should turn unto him and live."

In two other homilies Chrysostom uses Matthew 13:13 to illustrate his point. While speaking on Romans 14:23,²² he says that it was the case with the Jews that they did not do even that which they were able to do. They refused to see the significance of what was done among them

²²Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, Homily XXVI.

and therefore received no divine assistance in seeing. When they saw devils cast out they said Jesus had a devil. When they saw the dead raised, they tried to kill him instead of worshipping him. Thus Jesus said he spoke to them in parables "because seeing they see not." In speaking on II Cor. 4:3-4, Chrysostom applies the illustration of ophthalmia. To look at the light aggravates the condition of affected eyes rather than helping it. So also, if the gospel had been revealed to those who disbelieved their disbelief would have become worse. They became unbelievers upon their own responsibility, and God then prevented the light of the Gospel from shining upon them. This is what Jesus signified by his words about speaking in proverbs because "hearing they hear not."²³

Jerome (345-420) makes a novel use of the passage by appealing to it as a defense of his polemic methods. Pammachius has accused Jerome of "subtilty and side thrusts" in his writing. In a letter to Pammachius²⁴ (written about 393 or 394) Jerome points out that the Apostle Paul used every means available to make a point. "...And he carries every point he takes up." But if we accuse Paul of using quotations out of context and in a manner not harmonious with the source from which they came, Paul would

²³Chrysostom, Homilies on II Corinthians, Homily VIII, 2.

²⁴Jerome, Letter XLVIII.

certainly defend himself by appealing to Jesus, who said in effect (according to Jerome's paraphrase):

I have one mode of speech for those that are without and another for those that are within; the crowds hear my parables, but their interpretation is for my disciples alone.

Jesus put questions to the Pharisees but did not answer them. From this Jerome concludes that it is one thing to teach a disciple; it is a different matter to vanquish an opponent. He then quotes the saying: "My mystery is for me and for them that are mine."

In a letter to Paulinus²⁵ (about 395) Jerome gives instruction about understanding the Scriptures. As the proverb goes, "He who desires to eat the kernel must first break the nut." So David asked that his eyes might be opened that he might understand the Law (Psalm 119:18). How much more the Christian needs enlightenment, for there is a veil not only upon the law (II Cor. 3:14-15), but upon the Gospels and letters of the New Testament as well. For Jesus spoke to the crowds only in parables, and to make it clear that his words had a mystical meaning, he said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

The Conferences of the monastic John Cassian (360-430) are his records of the discourses of monastery

²⁵Jerome, Letter LVIII, 9.

abbots rather than products of his own thinking, but several passages are pertinent here. At one point he presents the argument of Abbot Chaeremon that a good will should be attributed neither always to grace, nor always to a man himself. Blindness which is unnatural but freely chosen is rebuked by the prophet in Isaiah 42:18-19. It is plain from Isaiah 43:8 that these people have eyes and ears, and so cannot blame their failure to see and hear upon natural causes. On the contrary, they must blame themselves. Jesus also points out in the Gospel that people see and do not see. They hear and do not hear nor understand. But it is plain that Jesus considered the possibility for good in them when he said to the Pharisees: "But why of your own selves do ye not judge what is right?" (Luke 12:57).²⁶ The emphasis here is on the freedom of the individual for either good or evil.

In another place Cassian reports the discourse of Abbot Theonas. At one point Matthew 13:13 is applied to those who think they are without sin. The abbot maintains that those who cover the eyes of their heart with a thick covering of their sins are those of whom Jesus said, "they seeing see not and hearing hear not." Such as these are not aware in their inner being of those faults which are great and deadly.²⁷

²⁶Cassian, Conferences, XIII, xii.

²⁷Ibid., XXIII, vi.

To conclude this section we turn to the writings of Augustine (354-430). Some before him had used the Synoptic saying about the "reason for parables" to maintain the freedom of the individual with respect to his salvation and judgment. Augustine, on the contrary, uses the saying to affirm his theology of predestination. In A Treatise on the Predestination of the Saints he sets forth a text from Paul's letter to the Colossians (4:2) to demonstrate that God is to be credited with the beginning of men's faith. He opens the door, so that men may begin to believe. The saying of Jesus in John 6:66 agrees with this: "No one cometh unto me unless it were given him of my Father," as does the saying in Matthew 13:11: "To you it is given to know the mysteries...but to them it is not given."²⁸

The matter is developed further in the treatise, On the Gift of Perseverance. In chapter thirty-five Augustine explains what predestination is. Can anyone deny that God foreknew those to whom he would give to believe? And by this divine judgment the rest are left in ruin, as were the people of Tyre and Sidon. They had the ability to believe, but it was not given to them to believe. Therefore they were not given the opportunity to see and hear the

²⁸Augustine, Predestination of the Saints, Chapter 40.

things which would have caused them to believe: "For they hear these things and do them to whom it is given; but they do them not, whether they hear or do not hear, to whom it is not given." This is true because Jesus said that to some it was given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of heaven, but to others it was not given. The same thing applies to the matter of obedience. Obedience is still necessary even for those predestined-to-salvation. Therefore, Augustine exhorts men to obedience even though it is the gift of God. By a process of circular reasoning, he argues that "to those who hear the exhortation of truth is given the gift of God itself--that is, to hear obediently."²⁹

It seems to disturb Augustine that Jesus' answer to the High Priest in John 18:19-20 (that he spoke nothing in secret) is not consistent with the teaching in parables. For the parables were spoken to make things obscure, to conceal a secret. Augustine solves the problem by reasoning that something may be said at once openly and not openly. This is what is indicated by the words, "seeing, they may see and not see" (Mark 4:12).³⁰ No attempt is made to explain just how this is done. Presumably, Augustine understands that it is accomplished by means of parables.

This completes our survey of the "reason-for-parables" saying as it was interpreted (or shall we say

²⁹Augustine, Gift of Perseverance, Chapter 35.

³⁰Augustine, On the Gospel of St. John, Tractate CXIII, 3.

"used"?) in the Ancient Church. In general, we may say that the writers who use the passage make it suit their own purposes. They employ the portions of it that fit their arguments and ignore what does not. Origen finds stated here the divine method that leads to the right use of individual freedom. Augustine takes the words "it is given" and discovers here the absolute foreknowing of the elect by God. Chrysostom maintains that these same words do not exclude the idea of free will, and that the conversion of the "blind" and "deaf" is still possible.

One can be sympathetic with the purposes of these arguments, but can hardly be impressed by the method of argument. Certain words, notably "mysteries," give the various writers a wide range over which to wander exegetically. We conclude this first section of our survey by drawing together the interpretations given to the word mystērion (or mystēria) by the Church Fathers.

Tertullian, as we have seen, maintained that the mysteries which the disciples were given to know were the things necessary to equip them as Apostles. Since they had been taught the obscure matters which others were not permitted to understand, they alone could validly teach and transmit the church's true doctrine. The future attainment of all truth through the Holy Spirit was also promised to them (John 16:12-13)³¹.

³¹Tertullian, Against Heretics, XXII.

Clement of Alexandria understands the mysteries in Matthew 13:11 as the rational explanations of the divine nature. Such things ought not to be uttered, as Paul says in II Cor. 12:4. Clement finds support for this contention in the Old Testament account of Abraham's command to Sarah to bake some unleavened cakes for their guests. In the LXX the word for unleavened cakes is egkruphiai. Clement follows the allegorical interpretation of Philo who takes the word to mean "occult mysteries" from its derivation egkruptō--"to hide in" (cf. Matthew 13:33). Allegorically interpreted, this means that when Abraham ordered unleavened cakes he was in reality saying that the "mystic word" about God's nature should be concealed. The Apostle Paul confirms this need for concealing the divine nature when he speaks of the "wisdom of God hidden in a mystery" in I Cor. 2:6-7, and when he writes to the Colossians of the "knowledge of God's mystery, Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col. 2:2-3). The divine nature, which is concealed from human understanding, makes itself known by hiding itself "by the power of faith in the believer."³²

In the Clementine Homilies, the mysteries of the Kingdom are those hidden truths of which the church is the

³²Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, V, xii.

custodian, and are to be kept for those within the church. In Homily XIX where this matter is discussed, the hidden truth concerns the ultimate destiny of the devil.

For Origen, Jesus' private teaching to his disciples had to do with the inner mysteries of the church. The parables were fully explained to those who came to him when he was alone. The wisdom of God in a mystery (I Cor. 2:6-8) means the church's advanced doctrines for mature Christians.³³

Cyril of Jerusalem specifies that the mysteries referred to in Matthew 13:11 concern the doctrine of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.³⁴

Chrysostom, Jerome, and Augustine are occupied with other matters when they refer to Mark 4:11-12 or Matthew 13:11ff., and do not develop the theme of mystery. Augustine does make a passing connection between the "mystery of Christ" in Col. 4:2 and the "mysteries of the Kingdom" in Matthew 13:11. His main interest, though, is to demonstrate that salvation is God's gift to the elect. He opens the door for the word; he gives men to know the mysteries of the kingdom.³⁵

³³Origen, Against Celsus, III, xix and xxi.

³⁴Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lecture VI, 29.

³⁵Augustine, Predestination of the Saints, XL.

CHAPTER II
IN REFORMATION AND POST-REFORMATION TIMES

One of the advocates of reform in the Church, though not so much one of the "Reformers," was Erasmus (1466-1536). In one of his best-known writings, the Enchiridion, the Synoptic passage Matthew 13:13 is mentioned briefly. Erasmus is commending the religion of the heart. Invisible works are preferable to outward bodily works. God is pleased only by the inner piety, though outward worship is not thereby condemned. The fact that the tongue sings psalms does not guarantee anything about the condition of the mind. The mouth may outwardly bless while inwardly the heart is cursing. The word of God may be heard with the physical ear, but better that it should be heard within. We read in the Gospel: "Seeing, they see not, and hearing, they do not hear." The prophet says: "You hear with the ear, and perceive not" (Jer. 5:21 and Isaiah 6:10?). Erasmus concludes: "Blessed are they who hear the word of God within. Happy, they to whom the Lord speaks the word inwardly, for their souls will be saved."¹

¹Desiderius Erasmus, "Enchiridion," Advocates of Reform, ed. M. Spinka, Vol. XIV, The Library of Christian Classics, (London: S.C.M. Press, 1953), pp. 346-348.

In keeping with his general sympathies and with the purpose of this piece of writing, Erasmus uses Matthew 13:13 to illustrate what he means by the religion of the inward being and its resulting felicity in the life of the Christian.

In his lecture on the twenty-ninth chapter of Deuteronomy, Martin Luther remarks that the human heart is so hard that no sign or wonder will move it, no words affect it, and no threats shake it. He states his belief that prophecies such as Isaiah 6:10 are obviously taken from Deuteronomy 29:4. The evangelists, also, express the same sentiment when they say "Close his eyes, and thicken his ears."² This rather free rendering may be dependent upon either Matthew 13:14 or John 12:40, but no doubt Luther had all the evangelists in mind.

In his comments on certain chapters in Matthew,³ Luther notes that Matthew 13:13 appears to contradict Mark 4:33. The latter of these tells us that Jesus used

²J. Pelikan (ed.), Luther's Works, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), Vol. 9, p. 272.

³The following discussion is based upon an article by Walther von Loewenich, "Luther und die Gleichnistheorie von Mk. 4:11ff." Theologische Literaturzeitung, LXXVII (1952), pp. 483-488. The article was translated for the thesis writer by John C. Kirby, Lecturer in New Testament, Faculty of Divinity, McGill University, Montreal. Presumably, the references in Loewenich's article refer to the Weimar edition of Luther's Works: D. Martin Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Weimar, (1883 ff.) though the article did not so state.

parables in order that his hearers in general might better understand. The next verse, however, draws a distinction between hearers in general and disciples in particular. Luther's text of Matthew 13:13 read "in order that hearing they may not hear" though the Vulgate reads "because hearing they do not hear." Accordingly, Luther gave the same meaning to all the parallel passages--Matthew 13:13, Mark 4:12, and Luke 8:10: the parables are used to "harden" those who do not understand. He writes that Matthew 13:13 refers to the wicked and Mark 4:33 to the good. No matter whether one speaks openly or in parables the wicked understand nothing since they do not wish to hear. The good, however, are reached without difficulty, even by figures and parables. The wicked fail to understand, not because of the parabolic form, but because of their "fundamental opposition to the Word." When the good come into contact with the Word, their obedience in listening causes it to be active in them (38, 555, 36; 38, 556, 10).

On the hardening theory itself, Luther straddles the fence. He holds on to the reality of "hardening" and regards it as the work of God, for nothing can be outside the Will of God. Yet, God may never be regarded as the author of sin. On Matthew 13:13 ("that hearing they may not hear" in Luther's N.T. text) he paraphrases as if Jesus were speaking:

This people is so utterly proud and wicked that even when I speak openly, not only do they not wish to hear and learn, but also they are deceived and blaspheme the truth. I do to them then what they desire: Since they do not wish to receive the plain word, they hear parables, which they cannot understand even if they wanted to. If you do not want to hear what you can understand, I will speak to you what you will not understand. If you want to be blind, then you will always be blind (38, 555, 16).

Here the parables themselves are explained as a means of concealing the truth, in spite of the fact that elsewhere Luther denies it and ascribes the failure to understand to men's own wickedness. A little farther on (38, 556, 32) Luther suggests that because of the pride of the people Jesus uses the humble form of parabolic teaching. But the people do not wish to come down from the "heights of understanding to the humility of learning." So hearing, they do not hear, and seeing, they do not see. It is the fault of their own ears and eyes, as Isaiah said, not the fault of Jesus' words and works. Nor is the fault in the parabolic method of teaching, for by it the humble do find God.

Is it true, though, that God does not want some to "be healed" as the final line of the Isaiah passage implies? No, this is not the case, says Luther, for it is the hard heart, not the intention of God that stands in the way of healing. God does wish to heal, as is shown by the sending of his Son. Luther has worked himself into a corner. The hardness of men's hearts is blamed for their refusal to see, but Luther will not totally absolve God from some sort

of responsibility for the hardening, though God cannot be the author of sin. Apparently, we must simply be content to leave Luther in his corner, straddling his fence!

From Luther's "Sermons on the Fast Days" (17. II, 160,5) we get a comment on Luke 8:10 which gives us some understanding of what "mystery" meant to him.

What is the secret? If we ought not to know it, why is it spoken of at all? A thing hidden which we do not know is called a secret. The secrets of the Kingdom of God are the things in the Kingdom which are hidden, but which Christ with all his grace reveals to us...So it is called a secret because it is both spiritual and hidden, and remains hidden until the Spirit reveals it.

A brief allusion to the "mystery of the kingdom of heaven" is made by Luther in his exposition of Psalm 45:16. What he intends seems somewhat ambiguous, but apparently it is that ministers of the church are to be made "princes over all the earth." This fact, however, is hidden from the eyes of men, and is therefore called a "mystery."⁴

At one point in his treatise "Of the Clarity and Certainty of the Word of God" Zwingli deals with the use of parable. Parables, proverbs, and riddles, he says, appeal to the understanding of men and cause them to value highly the teaching presented through them. By the use of "sweet parables" some may be persuaded to listen who would otherwise be dull and unwilling. No one could ever give a better

⁴Pelikan (ed.), Luther's Works, Vol. 12, p. 298.

representation of the unequal fruits of the Word of God than Jesus himself did in the parable of the sower and the seed. By it the disciples were provoked to find out the lesson hidden in it, but the ungodly were repelled by it. The parable itself did not repel them, but rather their own unreceptive and unwilling hearts. The words of Isaiah are used by Jesus to show that the greatness of their sins had blinded them. Thereby they opposed and angered God, with the result that the teaching intended to bring men to salvation became hurtful to them because of their sins. This is indicated by the saying in Matthew 13:12 ("Whosoever hath, to him shall be given..."). The meaning is this: He who comes desiring to learn from the word of God already has something. He is looking wholly to the word of God, not to himself. But he who comes to the Scriptures with his own opinion and interpretation and "...wrests the Scriptures into conformity with it, do you think that he has anything? No." From such a person even the opinion and interpretation which he thinks he has will be taken away. In him will be found the fulfillment of the words of Wisdom of Solomon 2:22; "For their own wickedness hath blinded them, so that they did not receive the things of the spirit of God."⁵

⁵Ulrich Zwingli, "Of the Clarity and Certainty of the Word of God," Zwingli and Bullinger, ed. G.W. Bromiley, Vol. XXIV, The Library of Christian Classics, (London: S.C.M. Press, 1953), pp. 72ff.

Zwingli interprets Matthew 13:12 as applying to the parables, but quite evidently he is thinking in terms of his own time. The discussion of Jesus' use of parables moves almost imperceptibly into an attack upon the interpretative approach to the Scriptures used by those who opposed the Zürich reformer.

John Calvin (1509-1564) has left for us his own efforts at a "harmony of the Gospels." The commentary furnished in this work gives us quite extensive knowledge of Calvin's interpretation of the passage in which we are interested.⁶ We may rather expect that Calvin's own theological views will find expression here, and he does not disappoint us. His commentary on Matthew 13:9 is a good introduction. ("He that hath ears to hear let him hear.")

These words were intended partly to show that all were not endued with true understanding to comprehend what he said, and partly to arouse his disciples to consider attentively that doctrine which is not readily and easily understood by all. Indeed, he makes a distinction among the hearers, by pronouncing some to have ears, and others to be deaf. If it is next inquired, how it comes to pass that the former have ears, Scripture testifies in other passages, that it is the Lord who pierces the ears (Psalm 40:7), and that no man obtains or accomplishes this by his own industry.

Parables, says Calvin (on Matthew 13:10), are usually meant to illustrate a point. Yet, too much metaphor

⁶John Calvin, Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke, trans. by W. Pringle. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub. Co., reprinted 1957), Vol. II, pp. 100ff.

leads to obscurity. Thus what Jesus might have said more plainly he wrapped up in allegory. For figurative illustration plus the interpretation given to it add energy and force to the discourse. (The moral of this seems to be that if you want to make something clear, first say it obscurely, and then explain it clearly!)

Jesus' reply (13:11) to the disciples' question indicates that the Gospel is spoken to men for various purposes. Jesus says that he speaks obscurely on purpose, so that to many what he says will be a riddle. If anyone objects that this is not consistent with the prophecy of Isaiah 45:19 ("I have not spoken in secret, nor in a dark corner..."), the answer is easy. One need only reply that in itself the Word of God is always bright, but the darkness of men chokes its light. People would see if their eyes were not blinded. Satan has blinded the reprobate, as Paul says (II Cor. 4:3-4). The elect have enlightenment given to them. It is a fixed principle that the Word is not obscure, yet it is concealed so that the reprobate may not learn. Jesus meant his teaching to be profitable only to a few. This clearly shows the magnitude of the grace bestowed on the disciples. The fact that it was "given" to them shows that it was not because of their merit that they received it. No reason can be found for this distinction except that God calls to himself "those whom he has gratuitously elected."

Jesus says in Matthew 13:13 that he speaks to the people in parables because they are not "partakers of the true light." No reason is given except the purposes of God. In commenting upon Mark 4:12, Calvin says that the parabolic method is not in itself, but "by accident," the cause of blindness in the hearers. He brings forward again the illustration of Irenaeus concerning persons with weak sight. The defect is not in the source of light, but in their seeing. So the Word of God "accidentally" hardens the reprobate because of their own depravity. God's purpose is to reconcile men to Himself, but the reprobate fail to obtain mercy because they are not softened to repentance.

Calvin's successor at Geneva, Theodore Beza (1519-1605), expressed his interpretations in a series of notes on the "hard places" of the New Testament. These notes are preserved for us in the margins of an edition of the New Testament published in 1683.⁷ On Mark 4:11 he comments that the "outsiders" are those who are "strangers... such as are none of ours." On Matthew 13:11 ("To you it has been given to know...") he explains:

The gift of understanding and of faith is proper to the elect, and all the rest are blinded through the just judgment of God.

The note on Luke 8:10 interprets "mysteries" as those things

⁷The New Testament (translated) with brief summaries and expositions of Theodore Beza upon the hard places. (London: 1683); see the notes on the passages cited.

which may not be uttered. The word used here, says Beza, means "to hold one's peace."

Another reformer who may be expected to share a viewpoint similar to that of Calvin and Beza is John Knox (1505-1572). Knox wrote down very little of his work of interpreting the scriptures. He himself remarks in a preface to the only sermon he ever published that in twenty years of "study and travail....I did not in writing communicate my judgement upon the Scriptures" except for the one sermon.⁸ In addition to the sermon, however, expositions of the fourth chapter of Matthew and Psalm 6 may be found.⁹

Knox's treatise "On Predestination" (published in 1560) contains no specific reference to Mark 4:11ff. or any of the Synoptic parallels. We shall perhaps never know how it happened that he did not use what seems to be such an obvious additional support for his argument! He does make use, however, of Isaiah 6:9ff. in arguing that God ordains some men to destruction. He blinded the eyes and hardened the hearts of some "so that they can neither hear nor see that they may convert."¹⁰ As some were elected before the

⁸David Laing (ed.), The Works of John Knox (Edinburgh: James Thin, 1895), Vol. VI, p. 229.

⁹Ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 25-114 and Vol. III, pp. 119-156, respectively.

¹⁰Ibid., Vol. V, pp. 90-91.

foundation of the world, so also were others reprobated. This is clear (to Knox at least) from Ephesians 1:4ff. Likewise Jesus affirmed this when he says that it pleased his Father "to hide the secrets of his kingdom from the prudent and wise, and to reveal them to little ones" because such was his good pleasure.¹¹ It appears that here Knox is placing in juxtaposition parts of two sayings of Jesus which are relevant to his purpose. Presumably, "secrets of his kingdom" comes from Matthew 13:11 or Luke 8:10, while the reference to things hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed to little ones is from Matthew 11:25 or Luke 10:21.

Knox goes beyond Calvin in maintaining that the Word actually hardens the reprobate, not merely reacting upon them "accidentally." He brings forward as evidence of this fact the Johannine quotation of Isaiah 6:9ff. in John 12:40. The evangelist not only declared the blindness of the people, but also that God "did in very deed justly blind their eyes and harden their hearts."¹²

For the final installment in this section, we pass over a considerable amount of time to J.A. Bengel. In Bengel's Gnomon of the New Testament (published first in 1742) we find the work of one who appears to be more interested in what the New Testament means than in finding

¹¹Ibid., Vol. V, pp. 96-97.

¹²Ibid., Vol. V, pp. 382-383.

supports for theological disputation. His comments on Matthew 13:11ff. and Mark 4:10ff. are presented here.

The term "mysteries," he says, is applied to secret things which are revealed to some, beyond what is revealed to all others. What is "strictly necessary" is revealed to all. Those who are "without" are not able to comprehend the mysteries clearly and fully. Furthermore, Jesus had cause to speak to the people in parables. He had spoken plainly to them previously, without parables, and such compassionate, ~~straight~~-forward teaching did not profit them--they did not understand. Bengel emphasizes that the Isaiah prophecy is said to be "refulfilled" (anaplēroutai). It was fulfilled in Isaiah's time, in the ages following Isaiah, and in the time of Christ. The final (quoted) line of the prophecy indicates that God had wished to heal these people, and that they could have been healed if they had turned to the healing. Finally, on the Matthew passage, Bengel notes that the heart, rather than the brain, is the seat of understanding and perception, and conversely the locale of hardening.¹³

In the Marcan passage those who were about Jesus are to be contrasted with those "without." These latter are "outside of the circle of genuine discipleship." Everything falls to them (ginetai) in parables. The purpose clause in

¹³J.A. Bengel, Gnomon of the New Testament, translated by J. Bandinel and A.R. Fausset. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1858), Vol. I, pp. 284-285.

verse 12 indicates that divinely-sent judicial blindness is added to their voluntary blindness. The true healing, spoken of in Matthew 13:15, is the forgiveness of sins. Psalm 103:3 is also called in to witness at this point.¹⁴

It is something of a relief to find in Bengel's work no forced props to uphold a theological argument, but sometimes one feels that his words are just pious explanations of what is already obvious. The merit of his work is that it steps away from a manner of handling the text in which more heat than light is generated. At the same time, however, it must be remembered that the Reformers did in fact live and work in times of heated controversy. Thus we may be helped to understand some of the extremes of interpretation, while not excusing them or uncritically accepting them.

¹⁴Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 512-513.

CHAPTER III

SINCE THE BEGINNING OF MODERN CRITICAL SCHOLARSHIP

IN EUROPE

In the years 1841-42, Bruno Bauer published three volumes on the Synoptic Gospels, (Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte der Synoptiker), maintaining the basic thesis that the Gospels were invented history. Bauer thought that the Evangelists composed the parables as well as the rest of the gospel narratives. The saying in Mark 4:11ff. and its parallels shows that the parables could not have been intended to make things clear. It indicates rather that they were intended for the purpose of exercising the intelligence of the disciples. This was the evangelist's theory. But the evangelist nullified his own theory by indicating that even the disciples needed to have some parables explained to them. Bauer could not see the point to such a literary method, but did not abandon his theory that the Gospels were purely a literary creation. Ultimately he came to the completely negative conclusion that there never was a historical Jesus.¹

¹Albert Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, trans. by W. Montgomery, 2nd Eng. Edition; (London: A. & C. Black, 1911), pp. 137ff., esp. p. 147.

The study of the parables by Jülicher (Die Gleichnisreden Jesu, 1888) laid the basic groundwork for all future study of them. Jülicher did not hesitate to assign Mark 4:11-12 to the evangelist. He said he would rather remove a little stone from the masonry of tradition than take a diamond from the crown of honor belonging to Jesus. According to Mark 4 and parallels, parabolic teaching was reserved for the unresponsive masses. Private explanations were given to the disciples but the parables were intended to hinder the conversion of others and even to harden them. This is an artificial construction of the evangelist. Another view still survives in Mark 4:33. This is that Jesus actually used parables in order that people might more easily understand. He spoke to them "as they were able to hear it."²

H. H. Wendt (Die Lehre Jesu, Vol. II, 1890) felt that the key to the understanding of Mark 4:11-12 was to be found by setting the saying in the latter part of Jesus' ministry. It cannot reasonably be held that the same Jesus who was sent to the lost, who called to himself the laboring and heavy-laden, would intentionally hide from earnest seekers the meaning of his message of mercy. But in his later ministry a saying such as this, involving an apparently

²Ibid., p. 262. See also A. Jülicher, "Parables" Encyclopaedia Biblica, Ed. T.K. Cheyne & J.S. Black, Vol. III (1899), col. 3564.

harsh judicial sentence, can be understood. Jesus was then engaged in training his smaller group of disciples. The outsiders are to be understood as those who have excluded themselves. Jesus' message of the Kingdom was now known throughout the land, and they had excluded themselves by not joining his circle of disciples. His teaching at that time was directed to his own followers, and others would not understand it. Moreover, this failure to understand was a divinely sent punitive sentence on those who had no desire for salvation and the righteousness of the kingdom. Jesus regarded the slighting of the gospel by the "wise and prudent" as bringing upon themselves a veiling of the Gospel by God. So teaching by parables was a means of speaking intelligibly to those with receptive hearts, while at the same time causing opponents to mishear what was said.³

For Wilhelm Bousset (Jesus, 1904), Jesus' use of parables was to lead his hearers from the realm of nature to the realm of the spirit. The statement of Mark (4:11ff.), followed by the other evangelists, is therefore preposterous. It is the "dogmatic pedantry of a later age" and serves only to obscure the clear image of Jesus. Throughout the parables this assertion is contradicted by Jesus' "unmistakable tone."⁴

³H.H. Wendt, The Teaching of Jesus, trans. by J. Wilson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892), Vol. II, pp. 82ff.

⁴W. Bousset, Jesus, trans. by Janet P. Trevelyan, (London: Williams and Norgate, 1906), pp. 40ff.

The secret of the Kingdom in Mark 4:11 is material for Wilhelm Wrede's theory of the Messianic secret (Das Messiasgeheimnis im den Evangelien, 1901). Wrede regarded Mark's account of Jesus' parabolic teaching as unhistorical because it was opposed to the essential purpose and nature of parables. The view of parables expressed by Mark arose, Wrede explained, because the idea was already held in the church that Jesus had revealed himself to his disciples, but concealed himself from the crowds.⁵

Albert Schweitzer, in commenting upon Wrede's explanation of Mark 4:11ff., proposes that since we do not know what is meant by the "secret of the kingdom" in Mark 4:11, nor why it must be veiled, we should therefore place the passage among the unsolved problems of Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom. We cannot extend the theory of concealment to all the parables Jesus used, but whenever he wanted to say more about the Kingdom than simply "It has come near," he used parables. We do not understand why his teaching was limited in this way. One reason is suggested, however, in Mark 4:10-12--Predestination. Jesus knows that the message which he offers is only for the chosen ones and that general public announcement of it could only thwart God's plan. Only the announcement that the Kingdom is at hand

⁵A.. Schweitzer, Quest, pp. 346ff.

and the call to repentance are given publicly. Any other teaching about the Kingdom is given in parables so that only the predestined may know what is being said. Schweitzer submits that the predestinarian view is consistent with the eschatology. For example, in the parable of the wedding feast (Matthew 22:1-14) the man who is recognized as not called is thrown out.⁶

An earlier book by Schweitzer (Das Messianitats und Leidensgeheimnis des Lebens Jesu, 1901) dealt extensively with the theme of the mystery of the Kingdom, but did not include any exegesis of the passage Mark 4:11ff. Schweitzer evidently understood that the secret of the kingdom had to do with how the final stage of the Kingdom (its greatness) proceeded from its initial stage (its smallness). The parables of the sower, the seed growing secretly, mustard seed, and leaven are called "parables of the Secret of the Kingdom."⁷

In the second part of his History of Primitive Christianity (first German edition appeared in 1914) Johannes Weiss deals with the fourth chapter of Mark in terms of the controversy between the early Church and Judaism. The church found it impossible to understand why the Jews refused

⁶Ibid., pp. 346, & 351 ff.

⁷A. Schweitzer, The Mystery of the Kingdom of God, trans. by W. Lowrie, (London: A. & C. Black, 1914), pp. 107ff.

to believe. It was unthinkable that Jewish perversity should make ineffective God's plan of salvation. Hence the church assumed that God purposed the unbelief of the Jews and withheld from them knowledge of Himself, that is, the secret of the Kingdom. Jesus did not want the Jews to know him as Messiah, so he silenced demons and concealed miracles, while allowing a man in heathen territory to tell everything (Mark 5:19). No sign was permitted to "this generation" (Mark 8:12). Thus the early church set forth its theory of veiling of the gospel and stubbornness on the part of the Jews.

Other material in the Evangelists' sources contradicted this theory, however. Weiss remarks that the individual narratives "protest continually against the conception." Consequently, alongside the idea of the divine concealment of the kingdom there was put forth the idea of the sin of the Jewish people--especially of their leaders. Their heart was hardened (Mark 3:5), they had blasphemed unforgivably (3:28ff.), they were hypocrites and their heart was far from God (7:6).⁸

Weiss also connects the parables chapter in Mark with the experience of the early Church missionaries. It was intended to give them hope and courage as they went about their work. It answered the question why Jesus spoke in

⁸Johannes Weiss, Earliest Christianity, trans. by F.C. Grant, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1959, Torchbook Edition), Vol. II, pp. 663ff.

parables. For the people of Israel the secret of the Kingdom must remain hidden. Thus the theme of the break between the Church and Judaism is indicated to us.⁹ Weiss ascribes this saying wholly to the Early Church and finds no basis for it in anything Jesus said.

E. Klostermann (Das Markusevangelium, 1926) and Rudolf Bultmann (Die Geschichte der Synoptischen Tradition, 1931) both¹⁰ concur with the judgment that Mark 4:11ff. is the work of the church. More recently, W.G. Kümmel (Verheissung und Erfüllung, 3rd ed. 1956) places Mark 4:11 among texts that have a doubtful place in the oldest tradition. For him it can be considered only as the early church's apologetic theory of parables.¹¹

An exception to this procedure is Rudolf Otto's Reichgottes und Menschensohn, (1934)¹². Otto agrees that the "curious theory of parables" which is set forth in Mark 4:11ff. arose at a time when the original meaning of

⁹Ibid., p. 695.

¹⁰Cited by V. Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1952), p. 257: Klostermann, p. 47; Bultmann, p. 351.

¹¹W. G. Kümmel, Promise and Fulfilment, trans. by D. M. Barton, (London: S.C.M. Press, 1957), p. 125, note 75.

¹²Rudolf Otto, The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man, trans. by F. V. Filson and B. L. Woolf, (London: Lutterworth Press, 1938), pp. 91-93.

the parables of the kingdom had become obscured. The theory was present in the parent-document (Stammschrift) used by the evangelists, and explained that Jesus spoke his parables in order not to be understood. This same parent-document also emphasized in Mark 4:33 that Jesus used parables so that people might indeed understand.

The theory made use of a saying that came originally from Jesus himself. The saying was mis-interpreted to fit the theory, which in itself is "a monstrous idea" and is contradicted by 4:33. In addition, Mark 4:11 is inconsistent with itself. Even if Jesus' teaching was presented to "outsiders" figuratively, it was at least presented to them. Lesser or greater clarity would be involved, but it could not be disputed that the teaching was given. Otto notes that the Hebrew māshāl behind the Greek parabolē can have the meaning "riddle," and then gives the following reconstruction of what Jesus said and meant:

To you (i.e., those who bring seeing eyes)
is given the mystery of the Kingdom of heaven,
but to others (i.e., to those of dull mind and
dim eyes) everything (that I say about the
Kingdom of heaven) remains a riddle, that is,
something not understood or comprehended.

Jesus was simply saying that those who had eyes to see and ears to hear and used them could trace the quiet growth and operation of the Kingdom. To others, words about these matters were nothing but a riddle. By means of the parables

Jesus sought to bring a "mysterious somewhat" to the awareness of men. He wanted men to see a miracle which had been effectual among them since the days of John the Baptist.

The most able recent attempt to deal with the passage has been made by Joachim Jeremias (Die Gleichnisse Jesu, 1st ed. 1947).¹³ He begins by pointing out that the fourth chapter of Mark is obviously composite and involves an artificial grouping of materials. Verses 11-12 are an insertion by Mark in the Church's tradition (which is itself of more than one layer). Hence these two verses belong to an independent tradition and must be interpreted without reference to their context. The parallelism in verse 11, the redundant demonstrative pronoun "those," and the triple use of the passive as a circumlocution for the divine activity, tell in favor of the authenticity of this saying. In addition, significant agreement, even to some detail, between verse 12 and the Aramaic Targum, as opposed to significant divergence from both the Hebrew and LXX versions of Isaiah 6:9-10, is additional evidence in favor of its authenticity.

The Greek word parabolē does not need to be given its usual meaning of "parable." It can also have the meaning "riddle" which corresponds to one of the meanings of the

¹³Joachim Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, trans. by S. H. Hooke, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), pp. 11-16.

Hebrew māshāl (Aramaic: mathlā). The hina which introduces verse 12 is to be understood as introducing the purpose of God. It amounts to an abbreviation of the phrase "in order that it might be fulfilled." Jeremias also notes that the Aramaic de may underlie the hina. The mēpote introducing the final phrase in verse 12 is to be understood in the sense of "unless." This interpretation is based upon the underlying Aramaic dilema and rabbinical exegesis of the Isaiah passage. Hence, the sense of the saying as Jeremias sets it forth is as follows:

To you has God given the secret of the Kingdom of God: But to those who are without everything is obscure, in order that they (as it is written) may "see and yet not see, may hear and yet not understand, unless they turn and God will forgive them."

The saying is not concerned with the parables, but with Jesus' preaching in general. For outsiders Jesus' words are obscure because they do not recognize his mission nor make the proper response to him--repentance. Yet there is still hope for them. If they do repent, God will grant forgiveness. Jeremias concludes by dating the saying not earlier than the confession of Peter and assigning it to the period of Jesus' secret teaching. Mark has been misled by the word parabolē into placing the saying in his parables chapter. The saying, however, affords no criterion for the interpretation of parables. The secret involved in this saying is the secret of the "contemporary irruption"

of the Kingdom of God in the word and work of Jesus.

In general, we may say that Jeremias' handling of the passage is the most inclusive as well as the most liberating. It deals most significantly with the terms and language of the passage, and calls upon the Aramaic background. We may raise two critical questions which are relevant here and will have a bearing on our later discussion. First, we may ask whether or not hina may indeed mean "in order that it might be fulfilled," and even if so, whether it is adequate to support this interpretation with the statement that "in the case of divine decisions purpose and fulfilment are identical."¹⁴ Surely such an important point deserves more development. Secondly, it may be questioned whether the relationship of repentance and forgiveness in the teaching of Jesus is of the order that Jeremias so specifically states: If they repent, God will forgive.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 14.

IN GREAT BRITAIN

An extended treatment of the parables of Jesus was given before the turn of the century by A. B. Bruce in The Parabolic Teaching of Christ (3rd ed. 1886). In his discussion of Mark 4:10ff. and parallels, he says that the disciples' question about parabolic teaching is directly applicable to the parable of the sower. This parable is a parable about hearing. Jesus directs it to the crowds at a time of crisis in his Galilean ministry. In view of the approaching crisis (that is, the falling away of many followers in John 6:66, which Bruce connects with the "great crowd" of Mark 4:1, Matthew 13:2, and Luke 8:4), Jesus exhorts his hearers to self-examination. Beyond this specific application, the passage may be applied to Jesus' parabolic teaching in general. Bruce says that parables are to be regarded as bound up with the mood of mind which the prophetic words alluded to in Mark 4:12 (and parallels) express. This "parabolic mood" is to be found in

one whose heart is chilled and whose spirit is saddened by a sense of loneliness, and who, retiring within himself, by a process of reflection frames for his thoughts forms which half conceal, half reveal them--reveal them more perfectly to those who understand, hide them from those who do not.

From this it follows that Jesus would not have used this method at the beginning of his ministry. Jesus spoke plainly at first, and if he used parables at that

time, they were simply illustrations. According to Jesus' own words, he began to speak in parables because his hearers "seeing, saw not, and hearing, heard not" (Matthew 13:13). They had seen his miracles and got a false notion of his mission. They had heard his previous teaching and got false ideas about the kingdom. So he turned to parables in order that those who understood might better understand, and those who did not understand might be even more mystified as to what he meant.

Did Jesus, then, intend to make blind men blinder, deaf men deafer, and hard hearts harder? Mark and Luke seem to say so, and on this basis some have dismissed the passages in Mark and Luke as the work of the church. But Mark suggests in 4:33 that the purpose of Jesus' teaching was to illuminate minds and to soften hearts. The parables might indeed have a hardening effect on some, but we must not misunderstand the temper of Jesus' words in Mark 4:11-12. They were not spoken in cold blood, but ironically--in the bitterness of frustrated love. As such they announced the very opposite of what Jesus worked for as his aim. By them Jesus hoped to provoke his obtuse hearers to jealousy and so defeat the import of his own words. This is the sense of the Isaiah passage uttered centuries before. The parables, therefore, were the utterances of a sorrowful heart, designed

to lead men to the truth.¹⁵

Bruce does not deal significantly with the differences between the parallel versions of this saying, and leaves it within its Synoptic context. He does attempt to date the event which includes this saying. One wonders if the discussion of "mood" is limited by psychologizing, persuasive though it may be.

W. O. E. Oesterley's Warburton Lectures on the parables were given in 1915-1919, but were not published until 1936. In his discussion of Mark 4:10ff.,¹⁶ Oesterley begins by dealing with the Hebrew and Septuagint texts of Isaiah 6:9-10. He notes that the meaning of the passage is toned down in the LXX, but only in word--not in essence. Isaiah had been directed to make known to the people the purpose of Yahweh. To the faithful few who received his prophetic word, the message was one of grace and favor. To the rest the prophet's words became a sign of divine wrath and "inevitably the cause and means of deserved perdition." Neither the prophet nor God desired that the people's heart should be "fattened." It was simply that to reject God's purposes entailed hardness

¹⁵A. B. Bruce, The Parabolic Teaching of Christ, (4th ed. rev.; London: Hodder and Stoughton, no date), pp. 17ff.

¹⁶W. O. E. Oesterley, The Gospel Parables in the Light of their Jewish Background, (London: S.P.C.K. 1936), pp. 53-54.

of heart and blindness of perception. When men ignored God's message they brought about in themselves the inability to understand it. In that state they could not be healed.

In Matthew, the evangelist gives the entire quotation as his own comment upon the situation in Jesus' time. The relevant portion had already been given in verse 13. The meaning of this saying is that since many came to Christ simply for what they could get rather than with the sincere desire to be guided by Him, they were unfitted to be "initiated into the mysteries of the Kingdom." Accordingly, it was not given to them to know the mysteries. To have verse 16 follow verse 13 makes the passage more pointed. The final line of the quotation in Mark (which Oesterley describes as "misquoted") is incompatible with the spirit of Christ. It may be safely ascribed to the evangelist. Luke's version of the saying is possibly the closest to what Jesus actually said, the hina being understood in the sense of "as a result that." Thus it was Jesus' intention that parables should speak to the inner circle of followers about the deeper meaning of the Kingdom.

Oesterley also suggests the possibility, but does not elaborate greatly upon it, that Jesus may have intended the quotation from Isaiah 6:9 to be understood in the light of Matthew 13:12: "To him who has will more be given..." In

this case, the words as used by Jesus would have had the same meaning that they had in their original setting. The "haves" and the "have-nots" are disciples and non-disciples, respectively.

H. B. Swete¹⁷ submits that the parables represent a change in the teaching method employed by Jesus. The opening part of Mark 4 says that Jesus "proceeded to teach" (imperfect of didaskō) in parables. "So it began, and the inexhaustible supply continued to the end of his life." Jesus' own statement as to the purpose of the parable-method is to be found in Mark 4:11ff. The usual explanation of Jesus' use of parables is that by them he intended to help the common people understand his teaching. Jesus' own explanation is that by them he meant to conceal rather than to reveal the truth he taught. The unexpectedness of this saying witnesses to its originality. The truth which it expresses is the following: The parables veiled Jesus' teaching from those who were not ready to accept it "in its naked simplicity." At the same time the parables preserved the message in the memories of those who did not accept it, so that if and when they became ready to accept it, it would be available to them.

¹⁷H. B. Swete, The Parables of the Kingdom, London: Macmillan & Co., 1920, pp. 3-4.

A. E. J. Rawlinson introduces his discussion of Mark 4:10ff. by inquiring about the intention of Jesus in using parables.¹⁸ Was it for the purpose of concealing his teaching from outsiders? It is difficult to think so. The purpose of a parable is to explain. It should not in itself require an explanation. An explanation might be needed, however, at a later time when the original context of a parable had been forgotten. Then it was supposed that Jesus had intended his parables to be difficult. The result was that they came to be regarded as allegories for which a "clue" to understanding was required. The Hebrew word māshāl could bear the meaning "allegory" or even "riddle." By a process of backward projection the belief came about that Jesus had privately explained the parables to his disciples. Mark 4:10-12, 33-34 is the general application of this theory to all of Jesus' parables. Only the initiated could understand the "mystery of the Kingdom."

Rawlinson does not rule out the possibility that Jesus might have reflected upon his own ministry and the failure of his own people to respond to him in terms of the Isaiah passage. He feels, however, that in view of the other New Testament passages which present similar arguments from

¹⁸A. E. J. Rawlinson, The Gospel According to St. Mark, (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1925), pp. 47-49.

the Old Testament (Rom. 9:18-29, 10:16-21, 11:8-10; Acts 28:25ff.), it seems more likely that this Marcan passage is a product of the Church's theology. It probably also reflects the experience of the church in preaching Christianity to the Jews. The early church thus explained the Jewish rejection as hardening which was the intention of the divine purpose. Rawlinson concludes by qualifying his opening statement that the purpose of a parable is to explain. We should not deny that the parables were meant to stimulate and challenge thought. Jesus did appeal to spiritual discernment, but that is not the same as teaching in an esoteric fashion.

T. W. Manson¹⁹ notes that Mark 4:11-12 divides men into two groups. What places a man in one or the other? The man himself does it by the response he makes to the parables. A person hears a parable. If it awakens in him religious insight and faith, he presses into the group of Jesus' close followers for more teaching.

The parable is in practice a test: and the response of a man to it is what determines whether he shall ever get beyond it to the secret of the Kingdom.

The difficulty in the passage is the hina in verse 12. It is absurd to think that either the object or result of parabolic teaching was to prevent insight, understanding, faith, and repentance. It is easy to dismiss this passage

¹⁹T. W. Manson, The Teaching of Jesus, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931), pp. 76ff.

as the evangelist's intrusion or interpolation into the tradition. But, says Manson, the apparent intrusion of verses 11-12 between the parable of the Sower and its interpretation is not so unnatural after all, if the Parable of the Sower is a parable about parabolic teaching.

There is strong evidence in favor of the authenticity of this saying in the correspondence of its final phrase with that of the Targum. It speaks of "forgiveness" (rather than "healing"), and the verbs are in the third person plural (as against both the Hebrew and LXX). The form in which Jesus alluded to the passage from Isaiah approximated to the Targum version. The ambiguous Aramaic particle de, which in the Targum is a relative pronoun, was incorrectly understood by the evangelist (or his source) as the equivalent of the Greek hina--"in order that." We may conjecture, therefore, that Jesus said:

To you is given the secret of the Kingdom of
God; but all things come in parables to those
outside who
See indeed but do not know
And hear indeed but do not understand
Lest they should repent and receive forgiveness.

The word "lest" (Greek: mēpote; Aramaic: dilema) in the last line is to be understood as meaning "if they did." It is significant, Manson thinks, that the part of the Isaiah passage which would most strongly suggest that parables were intended to harden the hearts of the hearers is omitted: "Make heavy..., make fat..., shut their eyes..."

Consequently, Manson concludes, the "quotation" from Isaiah is used by Jesus not to explain the purpose of teaching in parables, but to illustrate what he meant by "outsiders." By it he describes the person who does not respond to him and his mission with insight, repentance, and faith.

In his Bampton Lectures for 1934, R. H. Lightfoot was content to point out the gospel writer's general outlook rather than to probe behind it to the intention of Jesus. A comparison of the "reason-for-parables" incident in Mark and Matthew shows that Matthew omits the rebuke of the disciples. According to his gospel, they are encouraged and commended. The hina in Mark 4:12 becomes hoti in Matthew 13:13. Some have suggested that Matthew's version is more nearly original at this point, because it is possible to interpret the saying to mean that Jesus adapted his teaching to the blindness of men with a view to removing it. This, however, is contrary to the context of Matthew, whose point is that the Jews are rejecting Jesus. In Mark the teaching is given by parables because of the divine purpose. In Matthew parables are used as punishment for unbelief and refusal to repent.

Attempts to translate hina as "because" and mēpote as "perhaps" or "it may be that..." may be ascribed to the motive of trying to harmonize this passage with the

"mind of Christ." Lightfoot allows that such translations may be legitimate in some places (e.g. John 8:56 and Matthew 25:9), but at this point they are governed by the desire to explain or explain away a difficult passage. The better course is to let stand the renderings which present the evangelist's general outlook.²⁰

In his The Parables of the Kingdom²¹ C. H. Dodd emphasizes that the character of the vocabulary in Mark 4: 11-20 is foreign to the Synoptic Gospels, and its language and style are foreign to Jesus. Seven words in the passage are not proper to the rest of the Synoptic record, and all of them are characteristic of Paul. Two of them (mystērion and exō) occur in verse 11. According to verses 11-12, parables were used to prevent those who were not predestined to salvation from understanding Jesus' teaching. This may be regarded as the church's attempt to explain why both Jesus and the Church failed to get a favorable response from the Jewish people. Any reasonable reading of the Gospels shows that Jesus did not intend to conceal his message from people in general. Therefore he did not present it in a way that was calculated to make it unintelligible.

B. T. D. Smith draws attention to the fact that

²⁰R. H. Lightfoot, History and Interpretation in the Gospels, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1934), p. 194, note 1.

²¹C. H. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom, (London: Nisbet & Co., Ltd. Rev. ed. 1936), pp. 13ff.

Mark 4:10ff. recalls the traditional association of māshāl with "riddle," as, for example, in Ezekiel 17:2ff.

"Son of man, put forth a riddle,
And speak a parable unto the house of Israel."

As Plutarch explained that Homer used allegory to keep the ignorant from despising what they could not understand, so Mark explains that Jesus used parables in order that those outside the circle of disciples might not know the secret of the kingdom. It is doubtful that this theory of Mark's was widely shared, however. Matthew and Luke both make significant changes in what Mark wrote. In addition, this theory of parabolic teaching which Mark expresses is only part of a larger theory. He also represents Jesus as forbidding demons to speak and commanding those he healed to keep quiet about their cures. This was to conceal his Messiahship from all but the elect. Just as close followers are represented as "strangely blind" to the meaning of the parables, so in Mark 4:40f., 6:50-52, and 8:16-21, they do not comprehend the significance of Jesus' Messianic works.²²

Smith's discussion makes two things clear: (1) that considerable confusion results from Mark's interweaving of "larger" and "smaller" secrecy motifs; and (2) that more

²²B. T. D. Smith, The Parables of the Synoptic Gospels, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937), pp. 13, 28-29.

than one purpose or motive was at work in the material which the evangelist used. Perhaps the matter at hand can be set forth best in a question directed both to Mark and to his interpreters: If the close followers did not understand the parables, who were the so-called elect?

A. T. Cadoux discusses Mark 4:11ff. at several points in The Theology of Jesus.²³ He believes that the saying goes back to Jesus, but that it is out of its original setting. Certainly it was not the case that Jesus used parables in order that his hearers might not understand him. It is possible that the original saying was modified by the insertion of the terms "mystery" and "those that are without" since such terms are not found elsewhere in Jesus' teaching. Probably the phrase of original importance was: "all things happen in parables." Outsiders may see the events of Jesus' life and teaching without catching their meaning just as people may listen to a parable without catching its meaning. But those who listen to Jesus, follow him, and live in his presence, possess the mystery of the Kingdom--an inside knowledge which is the key to the significance of Jesus' day. It is suggested that others refuse to see intelligently lest it should involve them in repentance. Does this saying then suggest that God

²³A. T. Cadoux, The Theology of Jesus, (London: Nicholson and Watson, Ltd., 1940), see pp. 49, 64, 216, 226-227.

predetermines the refusal of some? Cadoux's reply is negative. One cannot find a saying of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels in which he speaks of God as predetermining the moral actions of men. Mark 4:11ff. might appear to be an exception of this, but it seems rather to describe a wilful refusal to see.

Cadoux links the saying in Luke 6:39ff. with Mark 4:11. The master's ideal is to make the disciple see for himself. The outsiders who see without perceiving stand aloof--they are not disciples. The disciples, on the other hand, are in close contact with Jesus, the master.

Outsiders are those who do not or will not see the meaning of the events happening around them. The disciples do see into the reality of these events. The difference lies in whether or not one follows Jesus. What is the content of the reality?

The mystery of the Kingdom of God can hardly be anything but the commonly unrecognized factors in God's way of ruling, of his Kingship, just those factors of Kingship through service and suffering, which unreasonable and incredible to many, were central in the teaching and life of Jesus, and were made intelligible and credible by all that He was.

The implication is that without what Jesus could give, people could not be expected to see. In such sayings as Luke 14:28-32 (counting the cost) and Mark 8:34ff. (taking up one's cross), Jesus himself recognizes that his message is not to be lightly received.

This discussion is stimulating, but we may be permitted to raise a few questions. Is not the saying in Matthew 11:25 = Luke 10:21 similar in thought to Mark 4:11? It may be readily granted that the terms "mystery" and "outsiders" are not used, but perhaps some similar descriptions may be found. Can Luke 6:39ff. afford a legitimate basis for interpreting Mark 4:11ff.? It may be composite in itself, as Matthew 15:14 and 10:24 indicate. Finally, does Cadoux's definition of the "mystery of the Kingdom" follow from an examination of the passage, or from his own theologizing?

In Jesus the Messiah, William Manson submits that the Markan theorizing presented in 4:11 rests on two points: (1) Certain parables, which the tradition designates as Parables of the Kingdom, originally meant "that in some manner the Kingdom of God had already become actual through the word and in the acts of Jesus"; (2) Most of the hearers did not grasp the significance of the parables. Originally they were "signs," but ultimately they came to be regarded merely as stories. Mark 4:10-12 and the parallels in Matthew and Luke show that the early Christian Community regarded the meaning of the parables of the Kingdom as a mystery which was beyond the ordinary understanding. In comparing the parallel passages, Manson thinks that the singular "mystery" in Mark refers to the total religious revelation made in Jesus. For Matthew and Luke, the plural "mysteries" coupled with the verb "to know" indicates a

divinely communicated knowledge of the truths of the Kingdom. These latter two evangelists think of the Gospel as authenticating itself by its reasonable character and its appeal to thought.²⁴

For the most part, the above discussion deals with the passage with which we are concerned as the theorizing of the evangelists. More recently Manson has offered another study of Mark 4:10-12.²⁵ His aim in this article is to be as faithful as possible to the Greek that Mark wrote, and yet to give an interpretation that avoids making parables the instruments of blinding. The saying is regarded as coming from Jesus.

Our attention is drawn first of all to the paratactic syntax of Matthew 11:25 (= Luke 10:21). Apparently, Jesus thanks God that he has hidden "these things" from the wise and understanding, and that he has revealed them to "babes." But, says Manson, the two clauses are not on the same level of the divine intention. They may be related as the following translation indicates:

²⁴William Manson, Jesus the Messiah, (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1943), pp. 36, 46, 55.

²⁵William Manson, "The Purpose of the Parables: A Re-Examination of St. Mark iv:10-12," Expository Times, Vol. 68, (1956-57), pp. 132-135.

I thank thee that while thou hast hidden
 these things from the wise and understanding,
 Thou hast revealed them to babes.²⁶

Manson then extends the application of this analogy to Mark 4:12, so that it reads:

"... in order that they may indeed see, though
 they do not perceive,
 and indeed hear, though they do not understand."

The mēpote introducing the final line is to bear the meaning of conjectural possibility. It is a cautious assertion, which may be translated as "perhaps" or "in case."

Throughout the discussion, Manson holds that the word parabolē means "parable" and not "riddle" or some other meaning of māshāl. The meaning of the passage is that Jesus does not shut anyone out. Non-disciples may be blind to the meaning of what he says. Yet, by means of parables he will cause something to stick in their minds which they will take with them. He sets a picture before their eyes; he impresses a story on their imaginations. Thus

something will get inside the door which
 mayhap will hold the door open to Jesus
 and eventually lead the non-disciples to
 conversion.

Some objections may be raised to this "re-examination."

²⁶H. H. Wendt made an identical suggestion in The Teaching of Jesus (1892), Vol. II, p. 84, note 2. He suggested Isaiah 12:1 (LXX), Rom. 6:17, and Matthew 18:21 as analogies to Matthew 11:25, but made no attempt to use the analogy to interpret Mark 4:12. Manson makes no reference to Wendt, however.

(1) The syntactical analogy does not hold: hina is involved in Mark 4:12, rather than hoti as in Matthew 11:25; the phrases of the saying in Mark 4:12 have to be reversed in order to fit the analogy and bring the qualifying conjunction (kai meaning "while" or "though") into the proper relationship. According to the analogy Manson's re-phrasing should read:

"...in order that though they may indeed see,
they do not perceive,
and though they may indeed hear, they do not
understand...";

which only serves to re-inforce what Manson is trying to avoid! (2) No account is taken of the subjunctive verb-forms idōsin and syniōsin, though Manson maintains he is trying to be faithful to Mark's Greek. (3) Though mēpote may bear the meaning "perhaps" (as conjectural possibility) in some cases, Mark's sense here seems rather to indicate that he meant "lest," as the re-inforcement of hina.²⁷ This seems, after all, to be one of the outstanding examples of what R. H. Lightfoot meant when he spoke of attempts to bring a passage into harmony with the mind of Christ.

Matthew Black's investigation of Aramaic backgrounds seeks to clarify what is legitimate in drawing conclusions based upon those backgrounds. One of the canons of procedure he lays down is that the assumption of

²⁷A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature, ed. W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich; (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 521.

mistranslation of an Aramaic original may be found to offer "the best available explanation of a difficulty, especially where there is a decided failure in the Greek."²⁸

In Mark 4:12, the hina is not the only difficulty. Mēpote, and the clause it introduces are no less difficult. Simply to remove the hina by conjecturing a mistranslation of the Aramaic de (as T. W. Manson does) leaves the mēpote clause hanging, because it depends logically upon what came before it. The de would be ambiguous, that is, subject to translation either as a relative pronoun or as introducing a causal, purpose, or result clause, only if there were no dependent clause following. Such a clause does follow in Mark: "lest they should repent and it should be forgiven them." Only in Luke's version, therefore, would it be ambiguous, since he does not have the last clause. In Matthew the hoti presents as much difficulty as the hina of Mark and Luke. Consequently, Black concludes, we may confidently assume a failure in the Greek. Both hina and hoti are different translations (and interpretations) of the Aramaic de, which originally represented a relative pronoun. This solves the difficulty only for the shorter version of the saying (minus Mark's final line) in Matthew and Luke. In Mark, even if we substitute the relative pronoun "who" for

²⁸Matthew Black, An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1946), p. 143.

hina, the difficulty posed by the final line still remains. It still indicates that the reason for parabolic teaching is to prevent repentance and forgiveness.

Mark wrote and intended what appears in 4:11-12. For him, parables were used "in order that...lest perchance." He or his source omitted a portion of the quotation (as T. W. Manson suggests, but not for the reason he gives) in order to bring the mēpote clause into close connection with the hina clause, thus re-inforcing the meaning. The saying in Mark is dependent upon a Targum source, as the phrase about forgiveness indicates. Matthew is dependent upon a source other than Mark and this is evidence that the quotation of Isaiah 6:9-10 occurred in a genuine saying of Jesus. It is unlikely that the "grim adaptation" of the quotation which Mark gives can be ascribed to Jesus. Neither Matthew nor Luke give any evidence to indicate that Jesus used the full quotation. Matthew's citation in 13:14-15 is his own typical use of the LXX. According to the Targum the people are to blame for their blindness and dullness. They have brought it on themselves.

In conclusion, Black says that we may regard the shorter version of the saying given in Matthew and Luke as being more nearly original to Jesus, without the final line given by Mark. The Aramaic de should be regarded as a relative in accordance with the Targum, to be translated by

hoi in Greek. Black suggests that additional evidence for his interpretation may be gained by noting that Matthew and Luke are drawing from "Q" as well as from Mark in this section. Matthew 13:16 is a "Q" passage (though found in a different context in Luke 10:23) and in Matthew it emphasizes a contrast between the disciples who do see, and those formerly mentioned (verses 11 and 13) who do not see.²⁹

Black's presentation has the advantage that it takes account of the intention of Mark and seeks to go behind what he wrote to the intention of Jesus. It is refreshing to read that Mark intended what he wrote, even though what he wrote presents difficulties. One could wish that Black had said more about the source "other than Mark" on which he thinks Matthew 13:13 is dependent. Is there any other evidence besides Matthew's hoti and the fact that "Q" material is present in the context? Black also states that in the Targum of Isaiah 6:9-10 the people are to blame for their own blindness and dullness. His translation of the Targum passage supports this with the phrases:

Gross is the mind of this people...
its ears has it made heavy, and
its eyes has it blinded...

The translations of this passage by both J. F. Stenning³⁰ and T. W. Manson³¹ contradict Black, however, for they

²⁹Ibid., pp. 153-158.

³⁰J. F. Stenning (ed.), The Targum of Isaiah, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1949), p. 22.

³¹T. W. Manson, Teaching of Jesus, p. 78.

indicate that the prophet was commissioned to make the heart of the people fat, to make their ears heavy, and to stop up or close the eyes of the people. Perhaps one who is confused by this contradiction may be allowed to wonder whether it is possible to determine who are our "best guides" (to borrow a phrase from R. H. Lightfoot) in this area.

To follow the argument of Austin Farrer in A Study in St. Mark³² is not always a simple matter. He moves back and forth across at least four themes with such fluidity that it is not easy to tell what he means. The four themes appear to be:

1. What Farrer himself thinks.
2. What Farrer thinks Mark thinks.
3. What Farrer thinks Mark thinks Jesus thinks.
4. What Farrer thinks Jesus thinks.

In chapter four of Mark, Farrer says we meet a theology of secrecy and revelation. We may learn the nature of the parables (the plural is important) about which Jesus' disciples ask by referring to the previously given Beelzebub parables (3:23ff.). The parable of the sower is but a specimen of many others, as 4:2 tells us. In itself, this parable is about hearing with a responsive ear--"profitable

³²Austin Farrer, A Study in St. Mark, (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1951), pp. 240ff.

hearing." In fact, it is the parable which teaches men to listen to parables. Stimulated by it, the disciples are led to ask about parables in general (4:10). In response Jesus gives two answers. First, he explains that the purpose of his parables is to instruct only those to whom God has given discernment (verses 11-12). Secondly, he explains the parable about hearing, which the disciples have failed to understand (verses 13-20). Thus, Jesus is saying that the parables both hide and reveal. The parable of the sower, however, is not typical of these, for it is the parable most readily understood. Anyone who cannot understand it will have difficulty understanding anything else that Jesus says. These hiding-and-revealing parables have to do with the mystery of the Kingdom--"the secret of the advent of the Divine Majesty." To those outside, this matter not only comes in parables (or riddles), but it continues to be a riddle to them.

The objection may be raised that parables are supposed to make clear, not to obscure, and that this Marcan message is the church's reflection on the forgotten meanings of parables. Farrer replies that for Mark a parable is a riddle. The same term covers both meanings. In addition, a parable about the Kingdom of God is made mysterious by its subject-matter.

The secret of the advent of Divine Majesty may be compared with the most ordinary and straight-forward things, but we shall still not understand the parable without divine assistance. We cannot understand the analogy of a mysterious thing to a plain thing without some grasp of the mysterious thing.

Therefore, a parable that teaches a "new and supernatural doctrine" about the Kingdom of God cannot adequately be interpreted unless the interpretation bears upon the mystery of the Kingdom. (This sounds, for all the world, like reasoning in a circle).

The theology of secrecy is concerned with both mysterious teaching and mysterious acts. Jesus gives the parables in chapters 2 and 3 as comment upon his strange acts. The parables are intellectual instruments by which the substance of the Kingdom may be grasped. The interpretation of the parable of the Sower is a fresh string of parables.

In summing up, Farrer says that this parabolic teaching is comment beforehand upon the greatest act of Jesus--his saving passion. Only chosen ears receive this comment, and even they do not fully understand it until after the act itself has taken place. He believes that Jesus revealed himself "with the degree and sort of reserve" that Mark describes, though what Mark presents is not a literal transcription of what was said by Jesus.

In his later study, St. Matthew and St. Mark³³

Farrer discusses the failure of the disciples to "understand." He refers to Mark 4:12, in which he says that Jesus is expressing his grief and surprise that his disciples have no better comprehension than the outsiders. The matter which they fail to understand is the mystery of the Kingdom expressed in the parable of the cornfield. There was a crop, even though the bad patches in the field failed to produce. Here the parable of the cornfield is explained as referring to the mystery of the Kingdom, rather than being the parable about listening to parables (see above). Perhaps it is too much to demand consistency in the matter, though the reader may certainly confess to some puzzlement.

In his commentary³⁴ Vincent Taylor says that Mark 4:10-12 has the appearance of a pronouncement-story; that is, a narrative which embodied a saying of Jesus that was useful to the early Christian community. The saying itself was original with Jesus, though its present form and setting are the construction of the evangelist. Verses 11-12 were an isolated saying. Verse 10 may have belonged (in the tradition) to verses 13-20, if the word "parables" was singular. Taylor thinks the saying in 11-12 referred

³³Austin Farrer, St. Matthew and St. Mark, (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1954), p. 60.

³⁴Vincent Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark, (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1952), pp. 254ff. See also Taylor's The Formation of the Gospel Tradition, (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1933), p. 80.

originally to the whole teaching ministry of Jesus, but Mark used it in the present context because he believed it referred to the purpose of parables.

In Mark 4:11 the word mystērion means a knowledge about the Kingdom of God which disciples possess, but people in general do not. The changes introduced in the parallel passages in Matthew and Luke show that Mark is more original. The words "in parables" are to be understood as meaning "in riddles," but this does not require that the Greek parabolē have two different senses in the same context, for originally there were two separate contexts. Taylor agrees with Black that Mark both wrote and intended "in order that...lest perchance." Aramaic studies may have bearing on the saying as Jesus intended it, but what Mark meant is clear. It is doubtful that we may detect any Pauline influence at this point in Mark. Paul spoke of the hardening of Israel. Mark refers only to the disciples and the scribes (6:52; 8:17; 3:5). Paul does not speak of the use of parables. Mark distinguishes between revelation to disciples and concealment from the crowds, a view which is also given expression in Luke 10:21 = Matthew 11:25 and Matthew 13:16f.

We can best understand Mark 4:11-12 as an unauthentic version of a genuine saying of Jesus. Its original form can only be conjectured. Possibly Jesus made

use of these ironic words of Isaiah after the failure of the mission of the Twelve, and the failure of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum to respond to him. This suggestion is superior to the view that Mark invented the passage.

The latest commentary on Mark is the contribution of C. E. B. Cranfield³⁵ and with the statement of his handling of Mark 4:10-12 we conclude our survey of scholars in Great Britain. It is probable that the Aramaic word rāz lies behind the Greek mystērion. By it is expressed the idea that God's thoughts are his secret which he may reveal to those whom he chooses. This concept was familiar to all who listened attentively in the synagogues. Specifically, the mystery in verse 11 is that the Kingdom of God has come in the person and words and works of Jesus. The secret of the Kingdom is the secret of the person of Jesus. Only faith can recognize this. The word dedotai signifies that such recognition comes only by divine revelation. The expression tois exō may refer either to those outside the house, or those outside the group of disciples. The use of the same term by Paul (four times) is hardly sufficient to account for Pauline influence here. "Parable" can mean "riddle," and the phrase "all things come in parables" may be translated as "all things are

³⁵C. E. B. Cranfield, The Gospel According to St. Mark, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), pp. 152ff.

obscure." Cranfield would give this saying as wide a reference as possible--the whole ministry of Jesus.

The quotation from Isaiah agrees with the Targum against both the Hebrew and LXX, and this fact testifies to the authenticity of the saying. Though the hina is a difficulty, we should not seek to remove it. Even if we could, there would be the problem implied by the phrase "it is given." The implication is that to some "it is not given," as Matthew writes out in full (13:11). The more inclusive difficulty, as Cranfield sees it, is "the teleological thinking which is characteristic of the whole Bible, including the Synoptic Gospels." The significance of the hina is this: The secret of the Kingdom remains hidden from many. This is both in accord with Old Testament prophecy and within the purpose of God.

The mēpote may mean "lest" in accordance with the Hebrew pen, or either of two meanings possible to the Aramaic dilema: "unless" or "perhaps." All of these are possible meanings of the Greek. In the case of "perhaps" or "unless" a hint of God's gracious purpose is given--a purpose beyond that expressed by the hina clause.

This saying, then, shows us that two motives are at work throughout the ministry of Jesus--the intent to reveal and the intent to conceal. They work in tension. Both are necessary to the divine purpose. By means of the

"veiled revelation" men are placed in a situation of crisis wherein they have enough room to make a personal decision. Man is left free to accept or reject the salvation which is God's ultimate purpose. A genuine "turning" would be made impossible by a compelling show of the divine majesty. This turning is made possible by an inward divine enabling (dedotai).

There seems to be a conflict within Cranfield's discussion. He wants to have his cake (or at least part of it) and eat it too. He wants to keep the hina as representing what he calls the "teleological thinking" of the Bible, but not everything that it means. He says that "it is given" implies also that "it is not given," yet man is free to accept or reject the salvation of God. If it is God who makes a man able to turn, or does not make a man able to turn, what kind of freedom is this? It seems to indicate a double predestination rather than to preserve man's freedom to choose or reject.

IN AMERICA

In his article on "Mystery" in the Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels³⁶ B. W. Bacon says that Mark uses the word mystērion in 4:11 to designate the Gospel as a whole. Matthew and Luke, on the other hand, indicate certain elements of the Gospel by their use of the plural mystēria. The teaching in parables is regarded by Mark, and to even greater extent by Matthew, as a fulfilment of the prophetic curse of Isaiah upon a disobedient people. Only the inner circle receive more than a "husk." Pauline influence is to be seen here, as Paul's argument about the hardening of Israel in Rom. 9:11 is similar to Mark's. In Rom. 11:8 the same Old Testament passage is quoted. Bacon maintains that Paul was the first to make use of Isaiah 6:9, and then other New Testament writers followed his example (e.g. Mark 4:11 and parallels; John 12:39-40; Acts 28:24-28). We cannot attribute the Markan interpretation to Jesus, for he used parables to "make clear," not to conceal. The suggestion that Jesus taught esoterically does not fit him. Bacon thinks it is quite probable that Mark 4:11 is based upon a "traditional logion" represented by the saying "My mystery belongs to me and to the sons of my household"

³⁶B. W. Bacon, "Mystery," Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, ed. James Hastings, Vol. II (1908), pp. 213-214.

quoted by Clement of Alexandria (Stromata V. x, 69). Matthew 11:25ff. (= Luke 10:21ff.) is the New Testament equivalent of this traditional logion. Bacon's conclusion is that though Mark 4:11 is open to suspicion in its present form, it represents a historical claim of Jesus that his teaching is laid hold of by revelation; it was accessible to "little ones" but hidden from the "wise and prudent."

The argument in Bacon's The Gospel of Mark³⁷ expands the above statement. In a more detailed fashion he traces the pedigree of the originally pre-Christian proverbial saying on which he believes Mark 4:11 is based. Since this investigation shows that the saying had a wide circulation, Mark need not necessarily have derived his version from "Q" but Bacon thinks it is probable that he did. The more authentic form appears in Matthew 11:25-30. Mark used as much of the saying as served his purpose and passed over the rest. He sets forth in 4:11-12 the combination of one distinctively Pauline doctrine--"the hardening of Israel," with another distinctively Pauline doctrine--"the hiding of the mystery" (I Cor. 2:7; Rom. 16:25f.; Eph. 3:3-5). Mark achieves this combination by adjusting a "Q" saying to his understanding of the Pauline viewpoint. Bacon qualifies his earlier statement that in Rom. 11:8 Paul quoted Isaiah 6:9-10 by saying that Rom. 11:8 is a combining of Isaiah

³⁷B. W. Bacon, The Gospel of Mark, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925), pp. 140 ff.

6:9-10 and Isaiah 29:10.

Whatever may be thought of Bacon's overall argument, the element in Mark 4:11-12 for which it does not account is how the "parables" came to be associated with the theories of "hardening" and "hiding of the mystery." Presumably, this factor is Mark's creative contribution, for none of the forms of the "traditional logion" say anything about parables.

The International Critical Commentary volume on Mark by E. P. Gould³⁸ was published in 1913. Concerning the word mystērion in verse 11, Gould explains that in the New Testament it does not mean something hard to understand, but something hidden. It is revealed only to the initiated, like the Greek mysteries. The fact of the only partial success of the Kingdom in its early stage is the content of the secret. What is hidden from all but a few is that the Kingdom is subject to a gradual growth. The "outsiders" are those outside the Kingdom. To them the mystery of the Kingdom is veiled by being stated in terms belonging to another realm, terms which need a key. Without the key the parable is a riddle.

According to the Hebrew of Isaiah 6:9-10, God is

³⁸E. P. Gould, The Gospel According to St. Mark, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), pp. 71-74.

represented as sending the prophet to harden the people. In the LXX the people will not hear because their heart is hardened and they have shut their eyes. Mark (and Luke also) follows the sense of the Hebrew in making the failure to hear and see the purpose of the parables. Mark preserves the original form of Jesus' saying, but does not preserve the irony which is the saving element in the Isaiah passage. Hence it appears that Jesus in all seriousness describes blinding as a result of the parables. For Jesus, though, a parable was a means of communicating esoteric knowledge--the mysteries of the Kingdom--not facts. The things spoken in parables were intended for the ears of the disciples only. If the Isaiah passage were applied to Jesus' teaching as a whole, it would have the irony of the original. Applied to parables, however, it must be taken seriously. The irony re-appears in the final phrase (which Gould calls "obnoxious" four times over!). At this point it must be ironically, rather than seriously, that Jesus used it, for it could not be that he intended to prevent forgiveness and conversion. Gould doubts that Jesus quoted the final phrase given by Mark, for he thinks that Luke's omission of it probably gives the genuine form of the quotation from Isaiah.

The conclusion of this discussion is that the parable was a contrivance used by Jesus to teach his

disciples privately while others (the outsiders) were present. The outsiders could not understand what he meant since they did not possess the clue to the parable. Parables were a secret code by means of which Jesus "got through" only to his disciples. They possessed the "key" and therefore got the message. All others heard the words but remained in the dark about the meaning. And Jesus intended it to be this way.

Gould does not state clearly whether "key," "clue," and "mystery of the Kingdom" are the same, but it appears that this is what he means. He does not attempt to explain why the disciples came to possess the clue and others did not. His interpretation of when the irony of Isaiah's words is to be preserved and when it is not to be preserved clouds the discussion, and seems arbitrarily designed to make the passage mean what he wants it to mean.

In his attempt to come to terms with Mark 4:10ff., G.A. Buttrick³⁹ points out that at their face value the words of this passage and its parallels deny "the mind that was in Christ Jesus." Jesus meant to enlighten, not to darken the lives of people. The interpretation of the quotation from Isaiah is important for our understanding of this saying of Jesus. If Isaiah was saying that it was

³⁹G. A. Buttrick, The Parables of Jesus, (New York: Harper and Bros., 1928,) pp. xx-xxi.

God's purpose to harden the hearts of his people and to prevent their conversion, then we must class this concept as an unworthy idea of God. Where we would today use analogy or result, the Old Testament scriptures frequently assume a purpose. Mark and Luke accept the sterner interpretation of Isaiah's words, and apply them to Jesus' use of parables: Parables were used purposely to blind the people. The view more gracious and more in keeping with the whole of scripture is that these words of Isaiah were spoken in the irony of sorrow at the self-will of the people and as a warning. Even then it is doubtful if Jesus meant by them more than to point out a similarity of situation between Isaiah's time and his own.

Matthew's version of the Isaiah passage (in the saying, not in his quotation from the LXX) corresponds to the spirit of the LXX. The versions of Mark and Luke correspond to the spirit of the Targum. Mark seems to be quoting from the LXX but modifies it to some earlier form. Matthew changes the repellent hina to hoti, and the subjunctives of Mark become indicatives in Matthew. Buttrick thinks Matthew's version of the saying is nearer to the intention of Jesus. Jesus used parables not so that people might be blind, but because they were blind and in order that they might see. Lives were self-darkened, and a parable could penetrate where other teaching would fail to

do so.

But Jesus also knew that some were hostile to his teaching. To such as these the parabolic method guarded Jesus' teaching from raillery by veiling it. Yet, in spite of themselves the hostile received a story that might "germinate in secret." A parabolic story did not increase their hostility and deepen their guilt as plain speaking might have done.

Buttrick makes the suggestion that Mark modified the LXX passage to some "earlier form" but does not suggest what this earlier form might be. He also fails to mention the correspondence between the Targum and Mark's final line of the quotation. His conclusion that Matthew's version is closer to the intention of Jesus disregards Matthew's purpose to portray the teaching in parables as a means of punishing the people for their blindness.

The American Aramaicist, C. C. Torrey, translates Mark 4:11-12 in the following way:

To you is given the hidden truth of the Kingdom of God; the parables are for those who are outside; those who indeed see, but without perceiving; who indeed hear, but without comprehending; lest they should turn and be forgiven.

In a note on this passage, Torrey explains that the frequently ambiguous Aramaic de was originally the relative pronoun, not the conjunction hina that appears in

verse 12.⁴⁰

B. H. Branscomb, in his volume on Mark in the Moffatt series,⁴¹ dismisses Mark 4:11-12 as the creation of the early church. These verses were inserted into the episode of the disciples' question about the parable of the Sower and the interpretation of the parable. This episode is itself secondary. The explanation found in verse 11 is an incredible one. If Jesus did not wish to have outsiders understand certain things, the obvious method would have been not to speak publicly about them. In addition, the attitude of Jesus toward common people is totally misrepresented here. He appealed to the publicans and sinners and thanked God that his message was understood by "babes." (Branscomb fails to mention here that Jesus also thanked God that it was "hidden from the wise and understanding.")

Branscomb says that two motives at work in the early church may be seen in this passage: an explanation to account for the rejection of Jesus by his contemporaries; and the notion supplied by the mystery religions that Jesus taught an esoteric knowledge--truths and mysteries which outsiders could not know.

F. C. Grant⁴² regards Mark 4:11-12 as an editorial

⁴⁰C. C. Torrey, The Four Gospels, (New York: Harper and Bros., 1933), pp. 75-76, and 299.

⁴¹B. H. Branscomb, The Gospel of Mark, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1937), pp. 76ff.

⁴²F. C. Grant, The Earliest Gospel, (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), pp. 106-107; 214; 256.

insertion. He follows the suggestion of Torrey that hina in verse 12 is an incorrect translation of the ambiguous Aramaic de, which should have been translated as a relative pronoun. Grant does not say whether this saying, even though an insertion, can be traced back to Jesus. The fact that he believes the Aramaic de lies behind the hina indicates that he thinks there is some "history" to the passage. Later he speaks of Mark as representing Jesus to be a teacher of esoteric mystery not comprehensible to outsiders. Such persons were not intended to understand the mystery. This defect in Mark's version of the tradition was corrected to some extent by Matthew and Luke (though Grant does not say how he thinks Matthew and Luke corrected it.) Mark substituted a theological idea of the person of Jesus for Jesus' own message about the Kingdom of God. He interpreted the gospel of the Kingdom to mean the mystery of Jesus' messiahship.

The point of view represented by Grant's contribution to the Interpreter's Bible⁴³ is quite similar to that given in his earlier work. Mark 4:11-12 is the evangelist's peculiar view of the purpose of the parables. This theory is utterly inapplicable to the teaching of Jesus. The whole of chapter four, and especially verse 33, protests

⁴³Introduction to and Exegesis of the Gospel According to Mark, Interpreter's Bible, Vol. 7, (1951), pp. 629ff. See especially pp. 636 and 699-700.

against it. Likewise, the whole synoptic record protests.

Again Grant points out that the Aramaic de is behind the Greek hina, but for the most part he deals with the passage as Mark seems to have intended it. As it stands, it is derived partly from the experience of the Church, and partly from the ironic oracle in Isaiah 6:9-10. The prophet looked back on his own frustrated ministry and described it as the divine intention. Mark regarded this aspect of Jesus' ministry as a method of secretly imparting truth. In reality, says Grant, this describes neither the method nor the intention of Jesus, and verses 21-22 and 33 contradict verses 11-12. Verse 13, where Jesus reprimands his disciples for obtuseness, is better regarded as addressed to later students of Jesus' collected parables.

Otto A. Piper has written an article entitled "The Mystery of the Kingdom of God" which deals with Mark 4:11 and its parallels.⁴⁴ We shall do well, he suggests, to assume that the word used by Jesus, and represented in Mark by mystērion, has the meaning "secret purpose" as it does in its Jewish background (e.g. Dan. 2:25 and other places in the intertestamental literature). The word does not connote something incomprehensible, but that which God reveals.

⁴⁴Otto A. Piper, Interpretation, Vol. I, 1947, pp. 183-200. See especially pp. 187-194.

The entire phrase "the secret of the Kingdom of God" indicates to us that God's purpose from the time of creation was eventually to exert his rule over the world directly. Jesus asserts that God now holds sway over men, that through himself the Kingdom is now in their midst (Luke 17:21). A change has taken place in the world, but it is a hidden transformation. It concerns the establishment of the divine power, and is perceived only by those to whom God has revealed it. The parables themselves do not disclose this secret. They only describe the process by which God sets up his divine power. The word dedotai characterizes the secret as divinely revealed to the intimate followers of Jesus. On the basis of other New Testament passages Piper says that the mystery "is not a doctrine concerning Christ, but rather, the Son of God himself."

The expression tois exō refers to those outside the Kingdom. There are Jewish antecedents for this phrase, which is used as a technical term in other New Testament passages. In his use of the word "parable" Jesus is speaking of the general impression his ministry made upon outsiders. They did not know what it meant. Piper thinks that the most probable interpretation of hina is that which refers to the fulfilment of prophecy: "in order that the prophecy should be fulfilled..."

Men have their chance to follow Jesus. Their refusal to do so will have permanent consequences. This

passage means that "God does not allow people to choose their own way of salvation." Once Christ has been sent to them, all other roads to salvation are blocked for them. Jesus is referring in this saying to the ontological basis of belief, not the psychology of belief.

Piper's suggestion that tois exō had Jewish antecedents is helpful, but would be more helpful if he had said something about them. The statement that the word used by Jesus (rāz) has the meaning "secret purpose" and the additional statement that the mystery is the "Son of God himself" seems to need clarification. Do these two equal each other? If so, in what way. If not, then how are they related?

In his approach to the parables⁴⁵ C. W. F. Smith assumes that the parables could be understood by those who heard them. If they had esoteric meanings, it is difficult to see why they aroused the response they did, that is, opposition from enemies of Jesus. We would have no problem at this point if it were not for Mark 4:10-12. The words "them that are without" run counter to Jesus' normally inclusive attitude.

Luke's version of the theory is even more explicit than Mark's, but Matthew gives it a more extended treatment.

⁴⁵ C. W. F. Smith, The Jesus of the Parables, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1948), pp. 30ff.

Matthew's words are statements of fact: firstly, that the secret has been given to some and not given to others; secondly, that the reason for the use of parables was that the people seemed to see but did not see, and seemed to hear but did not hear. Smith emphasizes that this latter statement is not a statement of purpose, but of fact. The contrast between the disciples and the rest of the people is plain in verse 16 where the eyes of the disciples are described as "blessed" because they see. The people, on the other hand, need to have Jesus' teaching explained to them by comparison to something they can understand.

It appears that Matthew deliberately modified what Mark wrote by omitting the last phrase ("lest haply...") and by altering Mark's hina with subjunctive verb-forms to hoti with indicatives. Smith says of the Isaiah passage that it "is a statement both of a fact and of the purpose by which the fact is explained." He notes that the LXX is less harsh than the Hebrew text, adding that "the Hebrews made no clear distinction between an observed fact and the divine providence of which the fact might be the result." The only conclusive thing about the Markan theory is that the disciples could understand the "difficult subject about which Jesus was teaching" better than the crowds could understand. For this reason Jesus used parables with the crowds, a viewpoint which is expressed in verses 33-34a, and

verses 21-22. Jesus intended to bring things to light, not to obscure them. It was the non-parabolic teaching that the people did not understand. He used parables in order that they might understand.

Smith thus aligns himself with those who take Matthew's version of the saying as capable of being interpreted in the least offensive manner. The interpretation fails to account for the fact that in the Gospels the disciples do not understand some of the parables. Even so, Smith maintains that they could understand the difficult subject matter of Jesus' teaching and did not need the "aid" of parables.

SUMMARY OF CRITICAL INTERPRETATION

This survey of the ways in which critical scholars have treated Mark 4:10ff. and its synoptic parallels reveals that there are a variety of conclusions about it. Without losing sight of the fact that there are variations of opinion within the ranks of those who hold similar positions, we may set down the main positions adopted. These are three in number.

First, there are those who dismiss the possibility that this saying as given by the gospel writers has any connection at all with anything Jesus said. It is entirely the formulation of the church to meet a problem

that arose within it, or it is the invention of the evangelist as he attempted to deal with the church's tradition in the process of recording it in writing. To name them in approximate historical order, Jülicher, Bousset, Wrede, J. Weiss, Rawlinson, Bultmann, Lightfoot, Dodd, B. T. D. Smith, Branscomb, W. Manson (earlier), and Kümmel, are the supporters of this position.

Secondly, there are those who hold what we may call the "opposite" point of view: that this saying came from Jesus in the approximate form and with the intention that is presented to us by the Gospel writers. Fastening upon one of the Synoptic versions (frequently Matthew's, though not always) as most nearly representing the original words of Jesus, they explain how the saying is to be understood. The explanation given usually seeks to remove the offensive impression left by the saying, and attempts to justify Jesus for having said it. Bruce, Wendt, Gould, Oesterley, Swete, Buttrick, C. W. F. Smith, and Farrer adopt this general position with regard to the saying.

Thirdly, we find that quite a few scholars hold to what may be described as a "mediating position." They feel that the evidence warrants the ascription of the saying in some form to Jesus, but that his intent and purpose are not accurately represented by any of the synoptic writers. Therefore, they seek to reconstruct the

saying and its application as Jesus most probably intended it. For this task they employ linguistic and grammatical emendations, possible or probable interpretations of specific words, and the evidence from the Gospels as to how the early church altered the sayings of Jesus in its own preservation, application and transmission of them. To this group of scholars belong T. W. Manson, Torrey, Otto, A. T. Cadoux, Black, Piper, Taylor, W. Manson (later), and Cranfield.

For the sake of inclusiveness, a fourth and minor category may be listed: those who deal so ambiguously with the passage that they fit none of the previous classifications. Bacon allows that Mark 4:11 may remotely represent a historical claim of Jesus, but treats it mostly as the church's work. Schweitzer says it is one of the "unsolved problems." Grant appeals briefly to the Aramaic de behind the Greek hina but refrains from explicitly stating that Jesus uttered the saying. As we now have it in our Gospels, it is the theorizing of the early church.

P A R T T W O

AN EXEGETICAL EXAMINATION OF MARK 4:10-13

CHAPTER IV

THE TERMS AND LANGUAGE OF THE PASSAGE

Our historical survey of the ways in which the critical scholars treat this passage has shown that there are conflicting conclusions among them concerning it. It will be noticed that there are reputable scholars holding to each of the three general positions summarized at the close of the previous chapter. Obviously, one could spend time weighing the specific arguments of one against another, and some of this will be necessary. However, the fact that learned opinion is so divided indicates that the most fruitful road of inquiry is a first-hand examination of the terms and language of the passage with which we are concerned. To this we now turn.

A statement of procedure may be helpful. At the beginning we asked a question in two parts: Did the saying in Mark 4:11-12 come from Jesus himself; and, if so what did he intend by it? In order to answer the first part, we must ascertain whether the language, thought patterns and ideas contained in the passage were or were not possible to Jesus. That is, were they part of the reservoir of

"theological raw-materials" available to him and to the people of his day? If they were not available to him, obviously there would be no need to deal with the second part of the question (in the form we have asked it) since it would cease to exist. The writer is satisfied that this is a needless alternative for the assembled evidence (if he has rightly interpreted it) confirms rather than contradicts the testimony of the Gospels that Jesus uttered this saying. At the same time that the evidence confirms the availability of the "theological raw-materials" about which we are inquiring, it also equips us to interpret the materials. We are thereby enabled to attempt an answer to the second part of the question--what Jesus meant by what he said. This attempt, while based upon the evidence, remains after all only an attempt, for we cannot always be certain (if indeed we can at any time) what the original mind of Jesus did with the theological raw-materials available to him.

MYSTERY¹

We want to know whether some concept represented by the Greek word mystērion was current among Palestinian

¹In the discussion that follows, I am especially indebted to two articles by R. E. Brown: "The Pre-Christian Semitic Concept of 'Mystery'," Catholic Biblical Quarterly Vol. 20 (1958), pp. 417-443; "The Semitic Background of the N.T. Mysterion (I)", Biblica, Vol. 39 (1958), pp. 426-448. Numerous references to the Old Testament, Intertestamental Literature, and the Qumran writings, and a sense of direction as well, were provided by them.

folk in the time of Jesus. Furthermore, we want to know something of the backgrounds of the concept.

In Greek usage, mystērion (usually in the plural) was a term referring to religious secrets. These were concealed in the customs and ceremonies of the groups that held them and were communicated only to initiates. In the Wisdom of Solomon 14:15 and 23, the writer speaks of the "mysteries" and "secret rites" of pagan worship. The Apostle Paul's use of the term in I Cor. 13:2 certainly would have called up familiar pagan connotations for his Corinthian readers. It is doubtful, however, that the meaning of the word in our Synoptic passages, or even the main thrust of its usage by Paul and other New Testament writers, is dependent upon Greek backgrounds. If other evidence were lacking, we might be forced to conclude that such dependence is indeed the case. But other evidence indicates both that there was a concept of "divine mystery" familiar to the thought of Jesus' time, and that it had meanings stemming from Semitic origins which are reflected in the Old Testament and intertestamental literature. It is this that we shall set forth in the following paragraphs.

The fact that the LXX translators used the Greek word mystērion to translate the Aramaic rāz in the second chapter of Daniel gives us at least the first step backward into the Semitic origins of the idea. Eight times in Daniel

2:18-47 the word is used in both the singular and plural forms. King Nebuchadnezzar's dream is called a "mystery." God is described as the "revealer of mysteries." The contents of the dream constitute the mystery. When the contents have been interpreted, the mystery is "revealed." God sends only the dream to the king. But to Daniel, the interpreter, God makes known both the contents of the dream and their interpretation. An important point here is that the mystery has to do with "what is to be hereafter" (2:29, 45). In other words, the God who "removes kings and sets up kings" (2:21) is making known his plan for the destiny of men. What He makes known, as well as the method of making it known is described as "revealing a mystery."

The mechanics of the revelation are another pertinent point. Dan. 2:19 says that the revelation came to Daniel "in a vision of the night." The Aramaic word for vision is hēzwā' which has its root in a Hebrew verb which can mean "to prophesy" (hāzāh). That is, Daniel's vision was a prophetic one. The suggestion of this language is that God makes mysteries known to his prophets, of whom Daniel is one. At this point, we may well recall the words recorded in Amos 3:7: "Surely the Lord God does nothing, without revealing his secret (Hebrew: sōd) to his servants the prophets." While it is possible to see a continuity of

thought between the concept of divine revelation represented in Daniel by the Aramaic rāz and the earlier prophetic concept represented by the Hebrew sōd, an intermediate step may be helpful.

Linguistically, we are presented with the obstacle that nowhere in the Old Testament does the LXX use mystērion to translate sōd. We do get a linguistic hint from a variant reading in the Wisdom of Sirach (3:19) for which there is extant a Hebrew equivalent. In the Sinaiticus MS the reading is:

Many are lifted up and illustrious,
But he reveals his secrets (mystēria) to the meek.

In the Hebrew text the equivalent for "secrets" is sōd.² Someone, at least, thought mystērion was a suitable equivalent for sōd. Several unknown factors prevent us from giving any conclusive value to this piece of evidence. Another linguistic hint, which points in the same direction, though coming from a later time, is Rev. 10:7. In an allusion to Amos 3:7, the writer speaks of the fulfilment of "the mystery (mystērion) of God, as he announced to his servants the prophets."

A more extensive source of evidence, though of still disputed value, is the Qumran Literature. In the Old Testament, the word rāz occurs only in the Aramaic portions

²Hatch and Redpath, Concordance to the Septuagint, Vol. III, p. 185; also R. E. Brown, Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 20, p. 424, note 32.

of Daniel. In the writings of the Qumran group, rāz is frequently found, and sometimes sōd is used in parallel with it. Several different kinds of mystery were indicated by the use of rāz among the Qumranians. There are, for instance, the mysteries of the divine providence. It is according to the "mysteries of God" that the angel of darkness seeks to lead the sons of righteousness astray (1 QS iii, 20-23). God has also ordained a time when error shall come to an end.

God in the mysteries of his understanding
and in his glorious wisdom has ordained a
period for the ruin of error, and in the
appointed time of punishment he will destroy
it forever. (1 QS iv, 18f. trans. Burrows)

In the closing psalm of the Manual of Discipline it is said that God has enabled the psalmist (or the community) to know the "mystery that is to be" (1 QS xi, 3-4). The final lines of the psalm bless God for his revelation to the community.

It is thou that hast taught all knowledge;
and everything that has come to pass has been
by thy will.
And there is no other beside thee
to oppose thy counsel,
to understand all thy holy purpose
to gaze into the depth of thy mysteries
or to comprehend all thy marvels...
(1 QS xi. 18-19 trans. Burrows)

Another type of mystery is that which relates to the community's interpretation of scripture. F. F. Bruce has drawn together some of the relevant material on this

subject.³ The Habukkuk Commentary is a good illustration for our purpose. On the words in Hab. 2:2, "that he may run who reads it," the commentary says that they refer to the teacher of righteousness, "to whom God made known all the mysteries (rāz) of the words of his servants the prophets." (1 Qp Hab. vii. 5). We recognize this latter phrase as an allusion to Amos 3:7, in which sōd appears.

The Qumran community believed that God had made known his purpose to the Old Testament prophets, who then recorded what He had told them. The prophets, however, did not know what this revelation meant, just as in the book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar did not know the meaning of his dream. As Daniel was divinely enabled to give the interpretation (Aramaic: pishrā', e.g. 2:30) of the king's dream, so the teacher of righteousness was enabled to give the interpretation (Hebrew: pesher) of the prophet's words. Thus the "mysteries" of the prophetic oracles, which in 1Qp Hab. vii, 5ff. have to do especially with the approach of the end-time, became the peculiar and treasured possession of the community. Two passages in the Thanksgiving Hymns which seem to celebrate this gift of interpretation in the community are the following:

Thou didst make me a banner for the righteous
elect,
an interpreter of knowledge in wondrous
mysteries. (1QH ii, 13. trans. Burrows)

³F. F. Bruce, Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmann Publishing Co., 1959), especially pp. 9ff.

For thou hast given me knowledge of thy
 wondrous mysteries
 and in thy wondrous company (sōd) thou hast
 wrought powerfully with me. (1QH iv, 27-38
 trans. Burrows)

Bruce feels sufficiently persuaded about the influence of this interpretative method of make an application to the interpretation of the Old Testament as exemplified in New Testament writings.⁴ If asked, the apostles would have said that they derived their interpretation of the scriptures from Jesus himself, who showed them how all that was written pointed to himself. They would have pointed to his words about "the mystery of the Kingdom" being given to them, and that without the gift of interpretation "all things" took the form of riddles. The saying in Mark 4:11ff., as Bruce sees it in the light of Qumran, is to be applied to Jesus' own understanding of scriptural interpretation which he teaches to his own disciples. With this in mind, one can see similarities between the thought of Mark 4:11-12 (so interpreted) and 1QS v, 11ff.

For these the men of error are not reckoned in his covenant, for they have not sought or searched for him God in his statutes, to know the hidden things (Heb. nistārōth) in which they have gone astray, incurring guilt, and the things revealed which they have done with a high hand, arousing anger leading to

⁴Ibid., p. 67.

judgment and the wreaking of vengeance
by the curses of the covenant, bringing
upon themselves great judgments to
eternal destruction without remnant.
(trans. Burrows)

It is clear, I believe, that both of the Qumran concepts of mystery about which we have spoken so far are explicit in the second chapter of Daniel. The "mystery" has to do with the divinely-given interpretation of the divine revelation. But the mystery also has to do with the divine purpose--God's plan for the government and ultimate destiny of men in the world.

There are still other concepts of mystery reflected in the Qumran writings. In one of the psalms, the following words appear after a recital of the order of the cosmic processes:

...I am wise; I know thee, my God;
by the spirit thou didst put in me, which is
trustworthy,
I have listened to thy wondrous counsel (sōd).
By thy Holy Spirit, thou hast put in me
knowledge in the mystery (rāz) of thy
intelligence.
(1QH xii, 11-13; Lines 11-12 trans. Burrows;
line 13 my own)

Perhaps the reference is to the understanding of the divinely-ordained order of things which the psalmist or the community possesses. In the fragment 1Q 27 (given the title "Book of Mysteries") "mysteries of iniquity" are mentioned in what remains of line 2. The main concern of this piece, though,

is with "the mystery of the future" or "the mystery that is to be." Apparently the writer is speaking of the opponents of the community. They, he says, do not know the mystery-that-is-to-be or how to save themselves from it. He himself is waiting for the time when wickedness will no longer exist, when righteousness and knowledge alone shall prevail. When that time comes, there will be no one left to restrain the "marvelous mysteries" (line 7). The "mystery that is to be" is not just the fact that judgment-time is coming. Rather the mystery itself seems to be the instrument of the judgment.⁵

Other literature of the intertestamental period can indicate to us the sort of concepts that were thought of in terms of "mystery" even though we do not possess the documents necessary to make linguistic comparison between, for example, Greek copies now extant and conjectured Semitic originals. Though the writer of the Wisdom of Solomon was acquainted with the language of the Greek mystery cults (14:15, 23, as noted above; also 8:4 and 12:5), he could also use the word mystērion in a sense more directly related to Jewish backgrounds. In 2:21-22 he says of the wicked men who make miserable the life of the upright man:

...their wickedness has blinded them
and they have not known the mysteries of God.

⁵For an extended discussion of this fragment see O. A. Piper, "The 'Book of Mysteries' (Qumran I 27) A Study in Eschatology," The Journal of Religion, Vol. 38 (1958), pp. 95-106.

Here the mysteries are the plan or purpose of God, as the writer understands it, to reward blameless living with grace and favor and a "hope full of Immortality." In 6:22, the origins and the nature of Wisdom are mystēria which the teacher of wisdom announces to his hearers. Applied simply to the human level, a mystērion is a king's secret (Tobit 12:7, 11). Likewise, the determination of Nebuchadnezzar to take vengeance on the territories that would not support him in going to war is described as "the secret (mystērion) of his plan" (Judith 2:2).

Among the pseudepigraphical writings, those ascribed to Enoch are richest in references to mysteries. In the early part of I Enoch the origin of evil on the earth is ascribed to heavenly beings who revealed hitherto unknown practices to their human mistresses.

9:6 Thou seest what Azazel hath done, who hath taught all unrighteousness on earth, and revealed the eternal secrets which were preserved in heaven.

10:7 (Healing for the earth is prescribed, so that): "all the children of men may not perish through the secret things the Watchers have disclosed and have taught their sons."

Cosmic secrets are spoken of in 41:3.

And there mine eyes saw the secrets of the lightning and the thunder, and the secrets of the winds,...
...and the secrets of the clouds and dew...

Some sort of "secrets" is involved at the time of Judgment as these next two passages demonstrate.

38:3-4 When the secrets of the righteous shall
be revealed and the sinners judged,
And the godless driven from the presence
of the righteous and elect,
From that time those that possess shall
no longer be powerful and exalted.

41:1 I saw all the secrets of the heavens
and how the kingdom is divided
and how the actions of men are weighed
in the balance.

The Elect One is "mighty in all the secrets of righteousness" (49:2), and at the time of resurrection and judgment "his mouth shall pour forth all the secrets of wisdom and counsel" (51:3). In an ascription of praise to God all the kings and rulers of earth declare:

Deep are all thy secrets and innumerable,
And thy righteousness is beyond reckoning (63:3).

In II Enoch (the Book of the Secrets of Enoch), after being lifted up to the very dwelling place of God in the heavens, Enoch hears Yahweh say to him:

Hear, Enoch, and take in these my words, for
not to my angels have I told my secret and I
have not told them their rise, nor my endless
realm, nor have they understood my creating,
which I tell thee today (24:3).

There follows an account of how Creation took place. Enoch is then instructed to make known to his sons on earth what he has learned in heaven (33:6). The passage 39:2 informs us that Enoch related to his children "all that is and was,

and all that is now, and all that will be till judgement day."

In the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, two references to mystery may be found. Test. Levi II, 10 records these words as spoken to Levi:

And when thou hast ascended thither, (i.e. to
a third level of heaven)
Thou shalt stand near the Lord,
And shalt be his minister,
And shalt declare his mysteries to men
And shalt proclaim concerning him that shall
redeem Israel.

Test. Judah XVI, 4 has Judah speak these words of warning to his children:

Wine revealeth the mysteries of God and men,
even as I also revealed the commandments of
God and the mysteries of Jacob my father to
the Canaanitish woman Bathshua, which God
bade me not to reveal.

It is obvious from this survey of the literature, that all the concepts of "mystery" embodied in it do not fit into the same mold. But it is also clear that usually the mystery has to do with someone's purpose, plan, or determined course of action which has or will come to pass. Sometimes it is a human figure who plans or purposes. Most often it is the Divine Being who, having devised his plan for the government, destiny, salvation, or judgment of men, seeks to communicate it to the person or group of persons of his choosing. It is this that the writers express by the concept

of "revealing a mystery." The mode of communication may vary. It may be a dream and its interpretation as in Daniel. It may be through the divine illumination of a teacher so that he may interpret the scriptures. It may be by means of special revelations given to an ancient figure, the records of which are purported to have come to light in the latter times. Sometimes the mystery is communicated directly by God, or through the agency of his spirit. Always the revelation originates with God. He gives the mystery to men that some of them, at least, might know his purposes.

Having taken considerable space to make the intermediate step, we now turn to the Old Testament backgrounds of the idea of mystery toward which the material in Daniel pointed. We have already encountered the Hebrew word sōd. As we noted, it is never translated by the word mystērion in the canonical books of LXX. According to the lexicographers its basic meaning is "council" or "assembly." In this sense the Psalmist uses it when he says:

I will give thanks to the Lord with my
whole heart,
In the company (sōd) of the upright, in the
congregation (Psalm 111:1).

Using sōd in a similar manner Jeremiah says of himself:

I did not sit in the company (sōd) of the
merrymakers, nor did I rejoice (Jer. 15:17).

A derivative sense of special intimacy or "confidence" is

also attached to the word.

The friendship (sōd) of the Lord is for those
who fear him,
And he makes known to them his covenant
(Psalm 25:14).

The perverse man is an abomination to the Lord
But the upright are in his confidence (sōd)
(Prov. 3:32).

It is the basic meaning of "council" or "assembly"
applied to the divine realm in which we are most interested
here. Perhaps the best place to begin is with another word
from Jeremiah. Delivering an oracle of the Lord, he says
of those "prophets" who give the people a vain hope:

For who among them has stood in the council
(sōd) of the Lord
to perceive and hear his word...?
...if they had stood in my council (sōd),
then they would have proclaimed my words to
the people. (Jer. 23:18....22).

The authentic prophetic word is thought of as given only to
one who has "stood in the council of the Lord." The
picture of this heavenly council of Yahweh though not the
designation sōd is present in I Kings 22:19ff., where
Micaiah ben Imlah explains how it came to be that all the
other prophets gave a message in contradiction to his own;
in Job 1-2; in Isaiah 6:1ff, the call and commission of
Isaiah; in Isaiah 40:1ff.; in Deut. 33:2; in Psalm 82:1ff,
and Psalm 89:7 (where sōd does appear). Of practical
importance for the life of the Hebrew people was the idea

that the prophetic message originated in the council of the Lord. The course of action determined upon by Yahweh in his sōd is proclaimed to his people by his messengers the prophets. Moreover, though sōd could be used to describe the heavenly "conference room" in which the divine decision was made, it could also be applied to the contents of that decision--the divine purpose itself, as Amos 3:7 tells us:

Surely the Lord God does nothing, without revealing his secret (sōd) to his servants the prophets.⁶

In popular usage, the term could also be used in a non-religious sense to designate the "crafty plans" of Israel's enemies (Psalm 83:3), or simply a secret on the human level (Prov. 11:13 and 20:19). But applied to God himself, sōd indicated the divine purposes for the destiny of men as made known to them through the prophetic tradition.

The question remains: What about those to whom the mystery is not revealed? What reasons, if any, are given for their failure to receive it? In Daniel the king's magicians, enchanters, and sorcerers tell the king that he has asked an impossible thing. They themselves believe that

⁶A similar situation, in which the word sōd is missing, however, is found in Gen. 18:17. Yahweh says, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?" The words "what I am about to do" serve quite adequately as a definition of "sōd."

"the gods" can do what the king asks, but their "dwelling is not with flesh" (2:11). That is, the gods could do it but they do not do it. Daniel's God, on the other hand, "the God in heaven who reveals mysteries" (2:28), can do this and does do it. He does it to those who "seek mercy of" Him according to 2:18, in this case Daniel and his companions. The more relevant point, as we have already mentioned, is that God reveals the mystery by means of a prophetic vision (hēzwā'). Though Daniel's prayer (2:20-23) speaks of God "giving wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding," Daniel himself claims no wisdom more than other men; the mystery is revealed so that the king may know the meaning of his dream (2:30). Or as 2:45 elaborates, God has made known "what shall be hereafter."

The implication is that Daniel is a prophet and the king's astrologers and sorcerers are not. They make no attempt to interpret the dream for apparently they know when they are licked. If the plot of the story had called for them to make the attempt, no doubt they would have been classed in some way with the false prophets who have not "stood in the sōd of Yahweh" (Jer. 23:18).

Sirach says that God reveals his mysteries to the meek (3:19 v. 1). Perhaps the "non-meek" are simply counted

unworthy of the mysteries. Elsewhere (39:1ff.) Sirach suggests that diligent application of oneself to the study of the Law, the wisdom of the ancients, the prophecies, the discourses of famous men, proverbs, and figures, is the path to understanding. The concept "mystery" is not involved in this section, though "secret things" (Greek: apokryphos) are mentioned in 39:7.

At Qumran the "mysteries" were the peculiar possession of the community. By definition, then, those who refused to join the community could not know its secrets. More specifically, they could not know because they did not have access to the community's peculiar modes of revelation. It is God who has opened up the light that enables the psalmist (or the community?) to penetrate into the "mystery that is to be" (1QS xi, 3). It is God who has made the sons of his good pleasure wise in his "wondrous mysteries" (1QH xi, 10). Here the ability to know the mysteries comes directly from God. In 1QH xii, 12-13 God is said to have put knowledge of the mystery of his intelligence into the psalmist through the agency of the Holy Spirit. The Habakkuk Commentary states that the teacher of righteousness was the agent of revelation for the "mysteries of the words...of the prophets" (1Qp Hab. vii, 5). Presumably he gave inspired interpretations, though we are not told the means through which they became known to him.

1QS vi, 6 and viii, 14-16 show that the study of the law and the prophets was a major part of the community's life. This, coupled with the statement that the men of error "have not sought or searched for Him (God) in his statutes, to know the hidden things in which they have gone astray" (1QS v, 12) indicates that the study of the scriptures within the community must have been regarded as one of the disciplines of illumination and insight. Finally, if the business of "casting lots" has more than just poetic content, there is evidence that the Qumranians believed in a predestination to blessedness among the "men of God's lot" or to an accursed destiny among the "men of Belial's lot" (1QS ii, 2ff.).

Among the other intertestamental writings, the Wisdom of Solomon specifically states that the wickedness of the unrighteous has blinded them to God's mysteries (2:21-22). In the Enoch literature, the central figure is given the revelation by means of a vision in order that it might be made known to men. It appears, especially in II Enoch, that men are responsible for what they hear. Enoch tells the secrets to his children, who preserve them for proclamation at the right time. Similarly, Levi (Test. Levi II, 10), who stands near the Lord, is to declare the divine mysteries to men.

The net impression gained from this is that when

the divine mystery is revealed men are themselves responsible for their understanding of it or their failure to understand it. Narrowness of group interest, theories of predestination, and the hindrance of sin may complicate this general impression, but they do not cancel it out. We shall have occasion to say more about this when we examine Isaiah 6: 9-10 and the "seeing and hearing" utterances of Jesus.

We have traced the backgrounds of the New Testament concept of divine mystery through the late Old Testament literature, and the intertestamental writings to its origin in the concepts that ante-dated and nourished the Hebrew prophetic tradition. That there is much more to be said on the subject, we would emphatically agree. But we submit that enough has been said here to serve our purpose in interpreting mystērion in Mark 4:11 and parallels. Valuable material that has bearing on the meaning of mystērion in other New Testament passages has been afforded also.

We have noticed that the sōd-rāz-mystērion complex is not a concept of which the precise meaning can be determined apart from its context. This holds true of the New Testament use of mystērion itself. The present writer's conclusion is that the general thrust of meaning provided by the prophetic understanding of what it means to declare

the divine purpose for the destiny of men in the world gives the best clue to the interpretation of mystērion in Mark 4:11. This, as will be developed later, is reinforced by the linking of the word "mystery" to the concept "Kingship of God."

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The Old Testament frequently makes mention of God as king or as acting in kingly fashion. Certainly He was regarded by the Deuteronomist as King of Israel since the time when the covenant was made (Deut. 33:5). When Israel became "like all the nations" and set up a human king, there were some who felt that this was a rejection of the kingship of Yahweh over them (I Sam. 8:7, 12:12). The prophets recognized Him as King (Is. 6:5 "my eyes have seen the King..."; Zeph. 3:15 "The King of Israel, the Lord..."; Jer. 10:7 "...O King of the nations."), though the divine kingship was not in itself the burden of their messages. The language of devotion in the psalms frequently voices this theme: "The Lord reigns" (Ps. 99:1); "The Lord sits enthroned as King forever" (Ps. 29:10).⁷ If one asks how inclusive God's kingship is, the answer is that ultimately the Jews thought of Him as king over all that is. He may be the "creator of Israel" (Is. 43:15), but likewise he "is the king of all the earth" and "reigns over the nations"

⁷See also Psalms 47, 93, 96, 97.

(Psalm 47:7-8). The refrain that occurs repeatedly in the book of Daniel states it fully:

His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And his dominion is from generation to generation.
(Dan. 4:3; also 4:34, 6:26, 7:27, and Ps. 145:13).

The intertestamental literature preserves the same concept of the divine kingship. The psalm of thanksgiving in Tobit exalts God as "King of the Ages" (13:6, 10) and "king of heaven" (13:7, 11). The Wisdom of Solomon maintains that earthly rulers are servants of God's kingdom (6:1-4). Sirach affirms that sacrifices are offered to "the Most High, the King of All" (50:15). The Psalms of Solomon frequently celebrate the divine Kingship:

5:18-19 ...thy goodness is upon Israel in thy
Kingdom.
Blessed be the glory of the Lord,
because He is our King.

17:1 Lord, thou art our King now and forever.

An identical parallel to the New Testament phrase "Kingdom of God" (Greek: hē basileia tou theou) is found in 17:3:

But we put our hope in God our savior
Because the might of our God is forever with
mercy;
And the kingdom of our God is forever upon
the nations in judgment.

We may also note here a passage from one of the Qumran hymns of thanksgiving.

Behold, thou art Prince of gods and King of the
honored ones,
Lord of every Spirit and Ruler over every work.
(1QH x, 8 trans. Burrows)

Throughout all of these writings, the fact that God is King is not so much argued as assumed. As far as the Jew was concerned, and in spite of appearances to the contrary, the universal kingship of Yahweh over his creation was not a subject for dispute; it was an established fact. Men might disbelieve it; they might ignore it; but nonetheless it stood confronting them.

The ideas and language attached to the main concept of divine kingship were not the property of theologians and sages only. If we are to trust the impression we get from the literature which comes from the times shortly preceding and contemporary with the time of Jesus, and indeed, from the New Testament itself, they were familiar to people in general. Anyone who linked together the terms "God" and "king" would have called familiar ideas into the immediate thinking of his hearers. Obviously, we are thinking here of Jesus' use of the phrase "Kingdom of God." It would be fallacious to assume that his hearers always understood by the term what he himself meant by it. A Zealot with his strong nationalist feelings might think specifically in terms of the "Kingdom of David" which he believed a successful rebellion against the Roman oppressor would bring. The Pharisee might have some thoughts of a political kingdom of Israel, but he was more concerned with

the pious observance of the Law, which for him was described as "taking upon himself the yoke of God's Kingdom."⁸ The Qumran covenanters looked upon themselves as those who would "prepare the way of the Lord" (1QS viii, 14). By its discipline in the study and obedient observance of the Law, the separated community would "make atonement for the land" (1QS viii, 6, 10). Yet, as the battle-scroll seems to show, the community also had detailed plans for the final struggle between the "sons of light and the sons of darkness." The slaying of the enemy is the judgment of God upon them, and God fights upon the side of the sons of light against "every nation of vanity." Significantly, it is said of the divine triumph: "And the God of Israel shall have the kingdom" (1QM vi. 6ff.).

But our question here is concerned with what Jesus meant by the words "Kingdom of God." Unfortunately for minds steeped in Western ways of thinking, Jesus nowhere specifically stated, "Now, what I have in mind when I say 'Kingdom of God' is..." We are left, therefore, with the

⁸K. L. Schmidt, et. al., Basileia, trans. from Theologische Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament by H. P. Kingdon; (London: A. & C. Black, 1957), p. 18.

task of examining his words about the kingdom.⁹ I suggest that we begin with the one specific thing that Jesus said God is doing with the "kingdom":

Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's
good pleasure to give you the kingdom.
(Luke 12:32)

Certainly we may agree with the implication (though not the specific statement) that it is God who has brought his kingdom near (Mark 1:15); that God has caused his kingdom to "come upon you" (Matthew 12:28 = Luke 11:20); that God is responsible for the fact that "a greater thing (the kingdom) than Solomon, Jonah, or the temple, is here" (Luke 11:31-32; Matthew 12:6). Men have not brought about the situation which these phrases express. Perhaps any of these or any of several other sayings about the Kingdom might serve as a starting point. Still, I suggest fastening upon Luke 12:32 for several reasons: (1) As already hinted, it

⁹This may seem to be an impossible task in the face of the obstacles that can be mentioned: Jesus was a Palestinian Jew, we are Westerners; we have "lost" the original setting of some of his words so that their immediate import is uncertain; debates still go on about the meaning of the words used in the New Testament (e.g., W. G. Kümmel on eggizō and phthanō in the early part of Promise and Fulfilment), and about the meanings of the probable Aramaic words that lay behind them; there is disagreement concerning which parables apply to the Kingdom, which ones came originally from Jesus, and what point (or points) each was intended to emphasize. Assuming, however, that there is some sort of consistency in the teaching of Jesus about the Kingdom of God, we may escape the temptation to throw up our hands in despair.

is more satisfying to work with specific statements than with implications. (2) This saying points to a significant Old Testament concept of the prerogative of God with regard to the Kingdom. Agreement between this saying and the Old Testament concept is not just in terms of thought, but sometimes in terms of language. (3) I think it can be shown that the meaning of this saying is supported by a considerable portion of Jesus' other teaching about the Kingdom, and certainly by his actions. I venture to say also, though it is outside the specific focus of this paper, that because this throws light upon the mission of Jesus, it also illuminates the mission of the Church.

We turn first to the Old Testament and what we referred to above (point 2) as the "prerogative of God with regard to the Kingdom." In Hebrew thinking the ultimate kingship belongs to God, and he gives earthly kingship to those whom he chooses. In Israel both Saul and David were "annointed of the Lord" through the agency of Samuel (I Sam. 10:1; 16:3, 13). At the time of Absalom's revolt, a rebel sympathizer could say to David:

The Lord has given (Heb. nāthan) the kingdom
(melūkāh) into the hand of your son Absalom
(II Sam. 16:8).

The Chronicler used identical language in reporting the words of Abijah to Jeroboam (II Chron. 13:5):

Hear me, O Jeroboam and all Israel! Ought you not to know that the Lord God of Israel gave (nāthan) the kingship (mamlākāh) over Israel for ever to David and his sons...

The Chronicler's concept of the matter may well be summed up in the expression "the kingdom of the Lord (mamleketh Yahweh) in the hand of the sons of David" (II Chron. 13:8; also I Chron. 28:5). II Chron. 21:3 shows that the idea of "giving the kingship" (nāthan hammamlākāh) could also be used to describe the transfer of sovereignty from father to son, Jehoshaphat to Jehoram in this instance.

The Hebrew words mamlākāh, melūkāh, and malkūth can be used in the various senses of kingdom, realm, dominion, rule, or reign. Sometimes the meaning seems to be conveyed best by the use of the word "kingship" with specific reference to the sovereignty involved. At other times the geographical sense of "kingdom" is present. When the reference is to God, the meaning "sovereignty" seems to prevail, though the geographical connection with Israel is not entirely lacking. It is not a case of being more one sense and less another sense, but rather that the writers could not think of the "kingship" of Yahweh without also thinking of Israel's relationship to him.

It is in the literature written nearest to the beginning of the Christian era that the universal kingship of God and his control in the affairs of men became most

prominent. The book of Daniel, for instance, may be thought of as an exposition of this theme. At the same time it presses home the purpose of God for his chosen people. Its honorific addresses to kings (2:37, 6:6) and elaborate description of kingly pomp (3:3-5) are a subtle satire on human pretensions. The satire is emphasized by the simple declaration that Daniel's God is "the living God, enduring forever" (6:26). The God of Heaven has given kingdom, power, might, and glory to Nebuchadnezzar (2:37), but in the time to come He will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed. It will break to pieces all other kingdoms and endure forever (2:44). The proud King Belshazzar is reminded that neither his father nor he himself gained his own position, but that

The Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your
father kingship and greatness and glory and
majesty (5:18).

When he became boastful of himself, Nebuchadnezzar was humbled until he learned that "the Most High God rules the kingdom of men, and sets over it whom he will" (5:21; cf. 4:32). Belshazzar, too, is to be humbled, and his kingdom is to be "given to the Medes and Persians" (5:28). Beyond this, it is said that Darius the Mede "received" it (5:30).

The seventh chapter in Daniel is the most prolific with this idiom. When the "one like a son of man" appeared before the Ancient of Days, "to him was given dominion and

glory and kingdom" (7:14). The saints of the Most High "receive the kingdom" and "possess the kingdom" (7:18, 22). Finally, it is said:

The kingdom and the dominion and the greatness
of the kingdoms under the whole heaven
shall be given to the people of the saints of
the Most High (7:27).

Both sides of the matter are articulated here. If God gives the kingdom (or kingship), obviously someone must receive it. In the case of the earthly kingdom, it is the human ruler. In the case of the eternal kingdom, the recipients are those designated as "the saints of the Most High."

In the Wisdom of Solomon kings, judges, and rulers are exhorted with the warning:

Your dominion was given you from the Lord
And your sovereignty from the Most High...
...For though you are servants of his kingdom,
you have not judged rightly.
(6:1...4, trans. Goodspeed).

The eternal destiny of the good is expressed in the following terms:

But the upright live forever
And their reward is with the Lord,
And the Most High takes care of them.
Therefore they will receive the glorious kingdom.
(5:15-16, trans. Goodspeed).

Sirach believed that "the authority of the earth is in the hand of the Lord" (10:4, 14), but he was stronger on practical advice than on any "theology of the kingdom."

Certainly he contemplated no "eternal kingdom." As far as he was concerned, when a man died, he inherited nothing except "creeping things, insects, and worms" (10:11)!

In the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, Judah gives direction to his children concerning the relationship of priesthood and kingship.

And now my children, I command you, love Levi, that ye may abide, and exalt not yourselves against him, lest ye be utterly destroyed. For to me the Lord gave the Kingdom and to him the priesthood, and He set the Kingdom beneath the priesthood. To me He gave the things upon the earth; to him the things in the heavens. (Test. Jud. XXI, 1-3).

Here too is expressed the idea that kingship is something God gives.

Now it does not appear that Jesus was much concerned about the kingship of earthly rulers, or even about Israel itself as a kingdom (though he is on record as speaking about Jerusalem being "the city of the Great King" -- Matthew 5:35). Whatever he meant by the phrase "Kingdom of God," he could employ the familiar concepts of God "giving" it and someone "receiving" it. It is tempting to make an obvious connection between what Daniel says about God giving the kingdom to the saints of the Most High and what Jesus says about the Father giving the kingdom to the little flock. We should resist the temptation, for even though Jesus may have used familiar concepts and language in which

to couch his message, we may confidently suspect that he transformed some of their meanings. The point we are making is this: It was familiar and natural for Jesus to express the idea that God gave "kingdom" to those of His own choosing. Thus Jesus was announcing that God was acting in a way that men knew to be characteristic of Him. He was exercising His divine prerogative in offering His kingdom to men. To the Hebrew mind, God is known by what he does (Ex. 20:2).

But more than this must be said. For though God was doing what men knew He did, what He was doing this time had a new aspect to it. It was not new to God, but it seemed new to what men had formerly understood about the ways of God. This "newness" is to be seen not by looking at the way in which Jesus said God was acting (that is, at the word "give," though the importance of that word is not reduced), but at the recipients of His action--the "little flock." It is God's prerogative to give the kingdom, to be sure. But it is also his prerogative to give it to whom he will. Who were those who made up the little flock? The Gospels report that some of Jesus' followers were fishermen from the sea of Galilee (Mark 1:16-20 and parallels). Jesus himself repeated what must have been a choice piece of gossip to the effect that he was the willing

companion of tax-collectors and sinners (Matthew 11:19 = Luke 7:34). Mark 2:15ff. and Luke 15:1 confirm this. He had compassion on a prostitute (Luke 7:36ff.), and told his critics on one occasion that tax-collectors and prostitutes were going into the kingdom before them (Matthew 21:31). A modern expression would say that the little flock consisted of "black sheep." Jesus says, however, that to such as these God delights to give his kingdom.

The full implication of the fact that it is God's prerogative to give the kingdom to whom he will is clearly expressed in another saying of Jesus which uses nearly identical language. Quite evidently, even apart from its immediate setting, it is the sort of saying which would have been addressed to opponents.

The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and it will be given to a people producing its fruits. (Matthew 21:43).

Surely those who found it most difficult to understand the "newness" of what Jesus said about the Kingdom must have realized to their own dismay that this would be the ultimate outcome of his teaching and action, even if he had not stated it so bluntly. If he was right, and it seemed to them impossible that he was, then separation from sinners, meticulous observance of the Law, its elaboration in the "tradition of the elders," and concern for ritual purity,

all want for naught. It was to them unbelievable that the sovereignty of God in the lives of men should ignore these essential things.

But Jesus was heedless of them. His descriptions of the recipients of the Kingdom of God stand in marked contrast. To the poor it is said that the kingdom of God is theirs (Luke 6:20). Conversely, it is difficult (though not impossible!) for the rich to enter the kingdom (Mark 10:23 = Matthew 19:24). It is the childlike who enter (Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17; Matthew 18:3, 19:14). People from the east, west, north and south will be found in the kingdom (Matthew 8:11 = Luke 13:29). Those who enter need a righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:20). The recipient of the kingdom spares nothing in order to possess it (Matthew 13:44, 45). In the Kingdom, the humble are the greatest (Matthew 18:4). Tax-collectors and prostitutes go in (Matthew 21:31). If the Kingdom is regarded as represented under the figure of the banquet in the parable (Luke 14:17ff. = Matthew 22:1ff.), then the recipients of the kingdom are additionally described as "the poor, the maimed, the blind, the lame" by Luke, and as "the evil and the good" by Matthew. As we have already noted, they are "those who produce the fruits of the kingdom" and a "little flock."

So far our method of "definition-by-description-of-the-recipients" reveals that the main point at which Jesus' concept of the Kingdom differed from that of his contemporaries was in the kind of people it included. We need to inquire further about what Jesus thought men could do, what he expected men to do, and what he asked men to do when confronted by the announcement "the Kingdom has come near."

The initial announcement (Mark 1:15) included a call to repent, by which, in the light of Hebrew backgrounds, must have been intended a "return" or "turning around," a change of opinion or attitude and a corresponding change of action. One who repents adopts a different outlook than he formerly had, and while grief and remorse may be present, the emphasis seems rather to be upon the purposeful pursuit of the newly-adopted course.¹⁰ Other sayings of Jesus indicate further that "repentance" was one of the ways Jesus spoke about the response he thought men should make (Luke 11:32 = Matthew 12:41; Luke 13:2-6; 15:7, 10; 16:29ff.). Men are to seek the kingdom (Matthew 6:33 = Luke 12:31; also Matthew 7:7 = Luke 11:9, which if the intention here is to direct men to the kingdom rather than to instruct disciples

¹⁰This I understand from metanoia-metanoeō as used to express the Hebrew shūb and nāham; e.g. Ex. 13:17; I Sam. 15:11; Ezek. 14:6; Job. 42:6).

in prayer, exhorts them to "ask" and "knock" also). They are to enter the kingdom (Matthew 7:13, 21; 23:13; Mark 9:47). It is possible for them to receive it (Mark 10:15 = Luke 18:17). Furthermore, Jesus seems to have expected men to be able to "take account of the present time" (Luke 12:56), that is, to recognize that the kingdom was "at hand." A whole host of references to what is expected of men are expressed in terms of "hearing" and "seeing." Though it may well be that some of these apply to the kingdom, the explicit connection is not made in any of them. We shall take up a full discussion of "seeing and hearing" sayings in the next chapter. At this point it is sufficient to mention Luke 11:31 = Matthew 12:42.

In addition, there are four conditions of men (apart from the "beatitudes") which Jesus approved as "blessed":

Luke 7:23 = Matt. 11:6 One who is not scandalized at him.

Luke 10:23 = Matt. 13:16 Those who witness the events of the present time.

Matt. 24:45 The "discerning" or "perceptive" person.

Luke 11:28 Those who hear and keep the word of God.

In contrast to the Pharisaic teaching, Jesus asked for no separation from "sinners." On the contrary, the Kingdom included them. He enunciated no Law to be observed, though he did indeed make plain what he felt was its inmost purpose (Matthew 5:21-48; Mark 10:1-9). He seems to have

been in open conflict with the "tradition of the elders" and with concern for ritual purity (Mark 7:1-13; Luke 11:37ff.). The Pharisees spoke of "repentance" also, but it seems to have meant for them the condition of entrance into the Kingdom, rather than a description of the response man could make to the previously-given Kingdom.¹¹ In contrast to the priestly class, Jesus was little concerned for the sacrificial worship of the Temple. It was enough that the Temple should be "a house of prayer for all nations" (Mark 11:17). In contrast to the Zealots, he invited men to no insurrection or attempt to throw off the Roman oppressor.¹² In contrast to Qumran, Jesus did not call men out into the desert to a separated community to "prepare the way of the Lord" and to make "atonement for the land" (1QS viii, 13; viii, 6, 10). For Jesus the primary meaning of God's Sovereignty was a functional one: God is seeking out and looking for lost people; when they are found He rejoices (Luke 15:1-32).

But while there is plainly the emphasis upon the present aspect of the Kingdom, (that is, men may even now enter, seek, receive, repent, etc.), the Gospels also

¹¹Sherman E. Johnson, Jesus in his Homeland, (New York: Scribners, 1957), p. 72.

¹²Acts 5:35-37; Josephus, Ant. XVIII, 1:1ff. (6 esp.) XX, 5:2ff; War II, 8:1, 17:8; VII, 8:1.

preserve words of Jesus that indicate something about a future aspect. For instance, he taught his disciples to pray "Thy kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10 = Luke 11:2). Some of the sayings are in the future tense and seem to have a future reference:

- (1) Matt. 8:11 "Many will come...and will sit down...
and the sons of the kingdom will be cast out."
- (2) Mark 9:1 "...until...the kingdom of God should come
with power."
- (3) Matt. 21:43 "The kingdom...will be taken...and will
be given..."
- (4) Mark 14:25 (and parallel accounts) "...I will drink
no more...until I drink it new...in the
kingdom..."
- (5) Matt. 7:21 "not everyone who says 'Lord, Lord'...
will enter..."
- (6) Matt. 18:3 "Unless you turn...you will not enter..."
- (7) Luke 21:31 "Whenever you see these things...you know
that the kingdom is near."
- (8) Matt. 13:43 "Then shall the righteous shine forth as
the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

It may well be that some of the "future-tense" sayings are simply a manner of speaking which means in effect "this is the way things are" (e.g., 1, 3, 5, 6 above). Some sayings with a future reference may be the result of the church's theologizing, or at least due to the context in which they were placed (as with 2, 7, 8). The words of the prayer "thy kingdom come" and sayings about the kingdom at

the last supper (and perhaps some other sayings as well,) cannot be accounted for in this way, it seems to me, and consequently it will not do to explain away the future aspect of the kingdom in Jesus' teaching.

Whatever this future aspect may have meant, it in no way detracts from the fact that Jesus called men to an immediate response to God's sovereignty. Nor does it detract from the radical newness of his conviction that the Kingdom was being freely offered to such as constituted his "little flock." No one before him had ever thought that the Kingdom should be given to the world's "unworthies." But Jesus thought so, and declared it to be the fullest expression of the divine intention. Seen in this light, his saying in Luke 12:32 is a confident assurance to his followers that God has indeed intended the joy they know in his company, no matter what the critics might be saying.

Those to whom the Kingdom has been given enjoy the fellowship of the company of Jesus. Modern terminology describes this fellowship in terms of "acceptance," as a new relationship to God, or as a liberating allegiance. All of these may indeed be true, but the question still remains: "What does Jesus say that the recipients of the Kingdom of God possess after it has been given to them?" When God gives kingship and dominion to earthly rulers they exercise authority. Does the analogy hold true for the recipients of

the "Kingship of God" in Jesus' teaching? Matthew 19:28b = Luke 22:30b seems to mean that the inner circle of disciples will be given positions of authority over others:

And you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

This statement, however, stands in strong contrast to the teaching found in Mark 10:42ff. and parallels:

You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

This latter teaching is more in keeping with the total impression of Jesus' own life, and when coupled with several other utterances of similar import, indicates that service is the responsibility to those to whom the kingdom is given. In Luke 17:10 Jesus urges the adoption of the attitude of dutiful slaves: "We are unworthy slaves; we have done what we ought to have done." In the so-called parable of the last judgment, service (Matthew 25:44) is the criterion of the judgment given. The Kingdom is to be given to a nation that produces its fruits (Matthew 21:43), and if the fruits are to be measured by the example of Jesus' own actions, they may be adequately described as service to others.

Jesus had little to say about service to God in

any of his recorded utterances. Only one item of teaching mentions this aspect of service:

No one is able to serve two Lords; for either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to the one and think little of the other. You are not able to serve God and mammon (Matt. 6:24 = Luke 16:13).

This saying tells us more about the demand for undivided loyalty than it does about the content of the service to which men are invited, but the example of Jesus' life illuminates both the demand and its fulfilment in action.

A concept of kingship which carried with it the responsibility of service was consistent with at least part of Jewish tradition. The theology associated with the institution of the Kingship made the favor of Yahweh dependent upon the obedient service of both king and people (I Sam. 12:14f). The most frequent expression of kingship and service to Yahweh is found in the Davidic Covenant theology. The key phrase involves the idea: "David, the servant ('ebed) of Yahweh" (e.g. II Sam. 3:18, 7:5ff.; I Kings 8:24ff., 11:32ff.; Psalms 78:70, 89:3, 20; Jer. 33:21f.; Ezek. 34:23f., 37:24f.). Solomon's prayer in I Kings 3:6 describes David as a servant who walked before Yahweh "in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart." In I Kings 14:8 Ahijah the prophet points to David, the servant of Yahweh, as the example by which Jeroboam is condemned.

In their prayers, both David and Solomon refer to themselves as "Thy servant" (II Sam. 7:17ff.; I Kings 3:7f.), though this may be only a courtly manner of referring to oneself in the presence of higher majesty. The Chronicler refers to Hezekiah also as a servant of Yahweh (II Chron. 32:16).

Service to Yahweh was both ethical and liturgical; that is, it involved both obedience and worship. The opposite side may be illustrated by reference to Ahab of whom it is said that he "went and ~~served~~ Baal, and worshipped him" (I Kings 16:31). David became the standard by which the kings of Judah were evaluated (I Kings 15:3, 11; II Kings 14:3, 16:2). Usually the service of the one possessing Kingship is directed to Yahweh who gives the Kingship, but Rehoboam was counseled by the elder advisors to be a servant ('ebed) to his people (I Kings 12:7).

With a broader view than just the kingship of Israel, the writer of the Wisdom of Solomon addresses some of his words to those in authority in all nations:

For though you are servants (hupēretai) of God's Kingdom, you have not judged rightly (6:4).

The concept of service-in-kingship which Jesus demonstrated and taught differs in several respects from antecedent concepts. It is not expressed as service to God but as service to others. It involves no exercise of authority over others. It offers no promise that those who

receive the Kingdom of God will be served by anyone. This final point is in marked contrast to what is said about the people of the saints of the Most High in Daniel 7:27:

And the Kingdom and the dominion...shall be given to the people of the Saints of the Most High; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them(cf. 7:14).

For Jesus, as for the heritage of which he was a part, kingship involved service, but the kingdom of God as he understood and announced it transformed the nature of the service that those who "received Kingdom" were to give. Service became most adequately described as "ministry" (diakoneō). According to Luke 22:27 Jesus said, "I am among you as the one who serves."

The phrase "mystery of the Kingdom of God" means the divine intention to use the divine prerogative which results in the establishment of a divinely-initiated gracious fellowship with and among men. The intention and the prerogative are as original as God himself, but so newly-stated and so obviously characteristic of Him that men can hardly believe it. Those who do believe it become participants in a serving fellowship which demonstrates the divine intention and purpose. Some are unable to believe Jesus' proclamation about God's purpose. Perhaps they are hindered by their own theological pre-suppositions. Perhaps they simply prefer not to believe. Whatever their reasons,

in the words of Mark 4:11, Jesus spoke of such persons as "the ones outside."

OUTSIDERS

Along with mystery, the term "outsiders" (hoi exō in Greek) in Mark 4:11 has been regarded as one of the most difficult to understand or interpret. The two together have caused some scholars to question the authenticity of the saying, or at least to question its authenticity in its present form. C. H. Dodd, for instance, designates these two terms, (along with five others in the whole passage 10-20) as primary evidence of later apostolic influence. His conclusion is that this saying is not from Jesus but is a piece of apostolic teaching.¹³ A. T. Cadoux, while maintaining that the saying in some form probably came from Jesus, points to mystērion and hoi exō as modifications introduced by the early church.¹⁴

The first impression one might gain from the suggestions of Dodd and Cadoux is that the term hoi exō was derived by the early apostolic writers from a Greek environment rich in its usage. The evidence available does not support this impression, however. Moulton and Milligan

¹³C. H. Dodd, Parables of the Kingdom, p. 14.

¹⁴A. T. Cadoux, Theology of Jesus, p. 49.

cite only one instance of a parallel to our phrase from the papyri.¹⁵ It is in the singular and refers to the devil. The T.W.N.T. lists references to Herodotus IX. 5, Thucydides IV. 66, 2 and V. 14, 3 among the classical writers.¹⁶ II Maccabees 1:16 uses hoi exō once to speak of a crowd waiting outside the temple. A similar though not identical phrase (hoi ektos) occurs in the prologue to the Wisdom of Sirach (line 5 in LXX).

In the New Testament itself, the substantival use of hoi exō occurs four times: I Cor. 12 and 13; Col. 4:5; and I Thess. 4:12. Each time it means Christians as opposed to non-Christians. In I Tim. 3:7, the phrase hoi exōthen is similarly used. An adjectival use of hoi exō occurs in Acts 26:11 ("the outside [non-Jewish] cities"), but this usage is beyond the scope of our inquiry. A 3rd-4th century A.D. secular Greek parallel to the Pauline usage is found in Iamblicus' "Life of Pythagoras" (35, 252) where it refers to non-Pythagoreans.

It has been alleged that the New Testament usage of

¹⁵J. H. Moulton & G. Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930),

¹⁶Theologische Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, ed. G. Kittel. (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, 1935) Band II pp. 572. A reference to Josephus, Ant. 15:314, was also given but I was unable to confirm it.

hoi exō is derived from the Greek mystery cults as a description of the uninitiated. But, as Cranfield points out,¹⁷ no instance of such a usage has been produced to support the contention. On the other hand, the employment of other terms such as amyētos, ateleustos, abakcheutos, and bebēlos, is attested.

The possibility is therefore open to us that the New Testament usage of the term "outsiders" is dependent upon Palestinian backgrounds that were available to both Paul and Jesus. O. A. Piper tantalizingly suggests that the Greek phrase had Jewish antecedents,¹⁸ but says no more than this.

A starting point for our investigation is furnished by the term that appears in Luke's parallel to Mark 4:11. In Mark disciples are contrasted to hoi exō; in Luke to hoi loipoi--"the rest." This phrase occurs frequently in the New Testament and sometimes designates Christians as opposed to non-Christians: e.g., I Thess. 4:13, 5:6; Eph. 2:3. On the lips of Jesus it is found in the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (Luke 18:11), where the Pharisee thanks God that he is not like "the rest of men." In the variant reading (MS. D) of Luke 11:2, the disciples

¹⁷Cranfield, Gospel According to St. Mark, p. 154.

¹⁸Piper, "The Mystery of the Kingdom of God," Interpretation, Vol. 1, p. 189.

are warned not to "babble" like the rest (hoi loipoi) in their praying. The parallel passage in Matthew (6:7) has ethnikoi (Gentiles) instead of hoi loipoi.

Using Aramaic parallelism, assonance, and alliteration as a basis for his argument, Matthew Black presents a case for Jesus' use of the Aramaic term sharka de'enasha ("the rest of men"). He contends that this Aramaic original underlies Luke's instances of hoi loipoi and Matthew's ethnikoi in 5:47, 6:7, and 6:32.¹⁹ Whether or not this is a plausible suggestion this writer is not competent to judge. The fact that hoi loipoi tōn anthrōpōn occurs in a parable of Jesus may be thought to add weight to the case. On the other hand, the general employment of the simple hoi loipoi by Luke (18:9; 24:9,10; Acts 5:13; 17:9; 27:44) may indicate only that he had a preference for the phrase. If Black's suggestion is correct, we are to think of Jesus as making a distinction between his disciples and the outside world in terms of "the rest of men." A corresponding Pauline usage occurs in Rom. 11:7, where Paul makes a distinction between the "elect" of Israel and "the rest" (hoi loipoi).

Another source of ideas relating to the distinction

¹⁹Matthew Black, Aramaic Approach, pp. 133ff.

between "ins" and "outs" comes from the terminology of the Pharisaic "brotherhoods." Precision in the dating of these groups does not seem possible, but a recent study²⁰ places their beginnings before the time of Rabbis Hillel and Shammai, and says they had fixed forms by the time of these rabbis.²¹ This means that acquaintance with the practice and ideas of the brotherhoods could be reflected by the New Testament writings, and by Jesus' own teaching as well.

Some Pharisees, though not all of them, were members of societies called habūrōth. In the society the members bound themselves to the strict observance of the Law and all their own elaborations of it for the precise ordering of their lives. The point in which we are interested here is that the member (haber) stood in contrast to the non-member or outsider ('am ha-ares). By separating himself from less strict Jews and by having his primary associations within the habūrāh, the strict Pharisee kept himself from ritual defilement. He avoided the 'am ha-ares, and what the 'am ha-ares raised or sold but failed to tithe

²⁰Jacob Neusner, "The Fellowship (habūrāh) in the Second Jewish Commonwealth," Harvard Theological Review, Vol. 53, (1960), p. 125ff.

²¹Israel Abrahams (in C. G. Montefiore, The Synoptic Gospels, Vol. II, pp. 665ff.) denies that the Pharisaic brotherhoods were contemporary with Jesus. They developed after his time. S. Lieberman, in his article "The Discipline in the So-called Dead Sea Manual of Discipline," Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol. 71 (1952), p. 206, assumes that Qumran and the Pharisaic habūrōth were contemporary and "of the first century."

properly. The term 'am ha-areš goes back to Nehemiah 10: 28-31 ('ammē ha-arašōth--"peoples of the lands"; 'ammē ha-areš--"peoples of the land"). In Nehemiah, these terms designated the heathen peoples living in Palestine. As the Pharisees used the term,

...the meaning shifted to the Jewish outsider, and a new singular 'am ha-areš was derived from it, denoting a single individual. This shifting of the two concepts "separation" and "outsider" from an ethnic religious to an inner-Jewish field of meaning is characteristic of Pharisaism.²²

Details concerning the relationship of a member of the brotherhoods to outsiders are given in the Talmud.

Several of the most explicit regulations are as follows:

Mishnah Demai 2:2 - The "reliable" (trustworthy) member is not to be the guest of an outsider.

Mishnah Demai 2:3 - The member is prohibited from selling or buying certain foods from an outsider; neither can the member receive an outsider as a guest in his own garment.

Tosefta Demai 2:2 - The member is not to give tithes to an outsider, and is forbidden to prepare food in an outsider's house.

Several extremely derogatory statements about outsiders are preserved in the Talmud. In Pesahim 49b, for

²²Chaim Rabin, Qumran Studies, (Oxford University Press, 1957) pp. 61-62.

instance, it is said that for a Jew to marry his daughter to an 'am ha-ares is like grafting a vine to a thorn-bush. Another rabbi declares that such marriage is as detestable as "lying with a beast." Furthermore, one may stab an 'am ha-ares even on the Day of Atonement when it falls on a Sabbath, and it is not necessary for the slaying to be a "ritual-slaying" with a blessing pronounced over it! The editors and translators of the Talmud note that these things were said humorously, though they reflect the intense antipathy between scholars and outsiders. Lieberman²³ also discounts these statements by saying that they are not characteristic of Rabbinic Judaism. He adds, however, that they were probably the statements of a few early extremists. We might well ask, "how early?" inquiring also about the breadth of their influence. No satisfactory answer appears to be forthcoming.

The point here for our study is that the currency of this Pharisaic distinction between the haber and the 'am ha-ares may have provided some of the environmental background for Jesus' alleged use of a related term. It may also help to account for the employment of the term in the letters of an ex-Pharisee, the apostle Paul.

Both Milligan²⁴ and Frame²⁵ suggest that tous exō

²³Lieberman, J.B.L.; Vol. 71, p. 205.

²⁴George Milligan, St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians (London, Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1908), p. 54.

²⁵J. E. Frame, Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians-ICC, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), p. 163.

in I Thess. 4:12 is derived from Rabbinic usage of the Hebrew word hūs--"outside." The illustration cited by these scholars and also in Brown, Driver and Briggs' Lexicon refers to Sefarim Ha-ḥiṣṣōnim, the non-canonical books. So far as I can presently determine, this is meager stuff on which to build a case.

Two other New Testament terms are worth mentioning briefly in this discussion. One is the word idiōtēs. In Acts 4:13 and II Cor, 11:6 it has the meaning "untrained" or "uneducated" in the specific subject matter of which the context speaks. Thus it has the sense of "layman." In I Cor. 14:16, 23 and 24, it is a technical term used by Paul apparently to designate adherents to the Church who were neither unbelievers nor full members. In Greek usage idiōtēs referred to a non-member of the mystery cult who was permitted to participate in the sacrifices.²⁶ The former sense of the term is also applied to the 'am ha-ares by the rabbis, as the glossary in the Talmud indicates. He is "uninstructed in the Law," and consequently, from their point of view, an outsider with reference to it.

The other New Testament word is allogenēs. Its only New Testament occurrence is in Luke 17:18 where it is

²⁶On this point see Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 371.

applied to the Samaritan leper who returned to Jesus after being cleansed. Much has been made of the fact that for Jews, Samaritans were "outsiders par excellence" (John 4:9, e.g.). What I should like to point out here, however, is a use of the word allogenēs in Sirach 45:13. Having described at some length the priestly garments of Aaron, he says of them:

Things as beautiful as these did not exist
before him.
No allogenēs will ever dress himself in them--
Absolutely none but the sons of Aaron
And his descendents throughout all time.

Here allogenēs may indeed include non-Jews, but its more specific reference seems to be to those who are not the sons of Aaron, that is, anyone who is outside the priestly tribe. The idea, of course, is nothing new to Judaism, but the use of allogenēs to express it is not common.

As the final consideration of this section, we may take a look at the Qumran Literature. Certainly the members of the community thought of themselves as being in marked contrast to those who were not members. The following are some of their picturesque descriptions of their opposite numbers:

1QS i, 10	"sons of darkness"
1QS ii, 5	"men of Belial's lot"
1QS v, 1	"congregation of the men of error"
1QS ix, 9	"men of deceit"
1QS ix, 17	"men of the pit"
1QH ii, 32	"the interpreters of lies"
1QH ii, 32	"congregation of seekers-after-smooth-things"

So far as I have been able to discover the Qumranians did not use a specific word meaning "outsiders." If prevailing scholarly opinion is correct, and the existence of this group is to be dated in pre- and early-New Testament times, the chief value of that fact at this point is that it supplies evidence of another Palestinian group thinking of itself as in some way distinct from those outside its ranks.

Any conclusions to this matter of outsiders must, I think, remain tentative. It is tempting to say that we have at the least established the fact that concepts of religious "outside-ness" and "inside-ness" existed in Palestine in the time of Jesus, but perhaps even this conclusion is based upon the adding together of bits and pieces which cannot properly be added. Beyond this, perhaps it is an irrelevant conclusion which a well-oriented sociological survey of any historical period would reveal. Even with these things in mind, however, I think it is clear that we cannot simply dismiss the term hoi exō as evidence that the church or the evangelist invented the saying of Jesus in which it appears, or that in itself it is a "modification" introduced into a saying of Jesus by the early church. It may also represent one attempt to translate into Greek what Jesus said in Aramaic. This is not to deny any polemic or theological use of the saying in the church.

It is simply to remind ourselves that an explanation or dismissal of the saying for what appears to be one valid reason may not take account of all the factors involved.

We have said that conclusions about hoi exō must remain tentative. Unless we are very skeptical, though, we must admit that the evidence in favor of Jesus speaking in terms of "outsiders" is at least as weighty as that which opposes it. Our next section on "Disciples" helps tip the balance (if balance it is) in favor of what the texts of Mark 4:11 and Luke 8:10 do in fact maintain.

DISCIPLES

In Mark 4:10-13 the word "disciple" (Greek: mathētēs) does not occur. The immediate audience indicated by the context is "the ones around him with the twelve" by which is meant a group of close followers. The phrase hoi peri with the accusative occurs in the previous chapter of Mark (3:34): "the ones around him sitting in a circle," whom Jesus describes as his "mother" and "brothers." In Luke 22:49, an identical construction refers to those who were with Jesus in the garden at the time of his arrest. In Acts 13:13 Paul and his fellow-travelers are described literally as "the ones around Paul." Frequent use of this construction is made in II Maccabees to indicate the partisans, adherents, or fighting force of some person (e.g.

1:33; 8:30; 9:3; 10:20, 25, 33, 35). Admittedly, there is difficulty in the Markan narrative with its change of audience (4:1-2, 10, 33-34), but the character of the saying in verses 11 and 12 is enough to suggest that it was delivered to a group of close followers: "to you has been given..." Those to whom it is addressed are in contrast to "those outside." Thus, even if verse 10 is regarded as Mark's improvisation, we are well-advised by the saying itself to draw together under the heading "discipleship" some of the things Jesus said to or about his followers.

The Gospels make frequent reference to the disciples of Jesus. Usually they are called "his disciples" (Matthew 5:1; 9:10; Mark 5:31, 8:33; Luke 6:13, 17). Once they are referred to as "his own disciples" (Mark 4:34). Mark 10:24 says simply "the disciples." At times the designation has a wider connotation, as in the instance where Luke mentions "a great crowd of his disciples" (Luke 6:17; also 6:13, 20). At other times a narrower meaning is indicated. Matthew specifically states "his twelve disciples" (Matthew 10:1). Usually Mark means a smaller group, small enough to be instructed privately (4:34, 7:17) or to get into a boat (6:45). The Gospels also mention disciples of John the Baptist (Mark 2:18 and parallels; Matthew 11:2 = Luke 7:18-19; Luke 11:1) and disciples of the Pharisees

(Matthew 22:16; Mark 2:18 v.l.). In the Gospel of John, the Jews make the claim that they are "disciples of Moses" (9:28).

The New Testament word for disciple (mathētēs) does not occur anywhere in the Greek Old Testament except as a variant reading (Jer. 13:21, 20:11) with no basis in the Hebrew. The cognate verb manthanō is often used in the LXX to translate the Hebrew lāmad, "to learn." A specifically religious sense is sometimes indicated: "that you may learn (lāmad-manthanō) to fear the Lord your God" (Deut. 14:23; 4:10, 17:19; 31:12-13). The content of what is to be learned may be the divine statutes and ordinances, or "righteousness" (Deut. 5:1; Psalm 119:7, 71, 73; Isaiah 26:9-10). The adjectival form limmūd is used as a substantive in Isaiah 8:16 ("my disciples") and Jer. 13:23 ("who are accustomed to do evil" -- literally: "disciples of evil."). In I Chronicles 25:8 the form talmīd ("pupil" or "disciple") stands in contrast to "instructor." Sirach 8:8 reads:

Do not neglect the discourse of wise men,
but busy yourself with their proverbs:
For from them you will learn (manthanō-lāmad)
instruction...

While this Old Testament background may be both interesting and generally helpful, it is neither very illuminating for nor very relevant to our immediate purpose.

Our understanding of what Jesus meant by discipleship to himself will depend solely upon what we can glean from his own words on the subject.

A reading of the Synoptic Gospels will reveal that while they speak often of Jesus' disciples, specific sayings of Jesus about his disciples or about discipleship are relatively rare. They can be listed quite easily:

Matt. 10:24 = Luke 6:40 A disciple is not above the teacher...It is enough that the disciple should be like his teacher. (Luke: ...every disciple who is fully equipped shall be like his teacher.)

Matt. 10:42 = Mark 9:41 Whoever gives one of these little ones a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly I say to you he shall not lose his reward. (Mark:... because he is Christ's...)

Mark 14:14 (Matt. 26:18, Luke 22:11) "Where is my guest room, where I am to eat the passover with my disciples?"

Luke 14:26 If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, and even his own life also, he is not able to be my disciple (cf. Matt. 10:37).

14:27 Whoever does not bear his cross and come after me is not able to be my disciple (cf. Matt. 10:38).

14:33 Every one of you who does not give up all his possessions is not able to be my disciple.

Matt. 13:52 Every scribe who is made a disciple (matheteuō) for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure new things and old things.

In the above list, the word "disciple" appears. There are other sayings of Jesus, some of them quite similar to "disciple-sayings," in which he speaks to those whom he desires to have close relationship to himself. This relationship may be described in terms of "following me," "coming after me," "doing the will of God," or family ties.

- Mark 8:34 (Matt. 16:24, Luke 9:23) If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.
- Mark 10:21 (Matt. 19:21, Luke 18:22) Go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.
- Mark 1:17 = Matt. 4:19 Come after me and I will make you to become fishers of men.
- Luke 9:60 = Matt. 8:22 Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but you go and announce the kingdom of God.
- Luke 9:62 No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks to the things behind is fit for the kingdom of God.
- Matt. 7:21 Not every one who says to me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven (cf. Luke 6:46).
- Mark 3:35 (Matt. 12:50, Luke 8:21) Whoever does the will of God, this one is my brother and sister and mother (cf. Mark 10:28ff. and parallels).
- Matt. 19:28 ...You who have followed me...will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Certain of these sayings are perhaps of doubtful authenticity, at least in their present forms (e.g. Mark 9:41, Matthew 19:28, Matthew 13:52?, Mark 8:34 and Luke 14:27?). Even so, it is possible to draw some conclusions from the common factors of the sayings that remain. The following points emerge:

1. Being a disciple of Jesus, being a follower of his, and coming after him all involve the giving up of possessions, the foregoing of family ties, and (perhaps) "cross-bearing." We conclude, therefore, that they are variant ways of expressing the same idea.

2. No explicit connection is made between discipleship and the kingdom (though the suggestion of some relationship is made in the case of the scribe in Matthew 13:52). Yet it is impossible to escape the conclusion that there is a specific connection. The follower who is called upon to forego his filial duties (Luke 9:60) is to "announce the kingdom." The follower who "looks to the things behind" is not fit for the kingdom" (Luke 9:62). In addition, the one who "does the will of God" not only has spiritual kinship with Jesus, but is also the one who enters the kingdom (Mark 3:35 and Matthew 7:21).

3. The implication is that if a disciple is to be like his teacher, then Jesus' disciples are to be like him.

4. The preponderance of personal pronouns in

these sayings indicates that the emphasis is not upon being a disciple but upon being Jesus' disciple:

"...comes to me..."
 "...my disciple..."
 "...come after me..."
 "...follow me..."
 "...says to me, 'Lord, Lord'..."
 "...my brother and sister and mother"

The clue to the meaning of discipleship follows directly from the final point. Jesus may describe those who have responded to him in various ways, but the point is that they have responded to him, to his message, to his teaching, or if we wish, to his mission. They have responded by attaching themselves to him in a way that may be spoken of and is spoken of by Jesus as being a disciple, as following, as coming after, or as being his kin.

In Mark 4:11, then, Jesus addresses those who are attached to him and makes a distinction between them and others who are not similarly attached. At the very least, his words to the disciples are an assurance that in his company they do indeed participate in the divine intention to establish a gracious fellowship with and among men.

PARABLE

The word "parable" in Mark 4:11 has been the source of much discussion and some perplexity, not only with regard to this passage in particular, but also with regard to the interpretation of those sayings which the Gospels

designate as "parables." From an examination of the use of the Greek term parabolē it is readily seen that there is more than one way in which it can be used. In the Gospels alone, utterances as different as Luke 4:23 ("Physician, heal thyself"), and Mark 12:1-9 (also Luke 20:9-16 and Matthew 21:33-41--the Wicked Vineyard keepers) are classed as parables. Though fifty or more Gospel units of teaching may be listed as "parables" only rarely is the designation found on the lips of Jesus himself:

Luke 4:23 "...this parable--'Physician, heal yourself'"

Mark 4:11 "...but to those outside everything
(Matt. 13:13, parables..."
Luke 8:10)

Mark 4:13 "You don't understand this parable?
(Matt. 13:18, How will you understand all the
Luke 8:11) parables?"

Mark 4:30 "How shall I make a simile for the
Kingdom of God, or in what parable
shall I put it? As a seed of
mustard..."

Matt. 21:33 "Listen to another parable..." (story
of the vineyard-keepers follows)

Mark 13:28 "From the fig-free learn the parable..."
(Matt. 24:32,
Luke 21:29)

There is considerable doubt as to the authenticity of the explanation of the parable of the Sower and its introduction (Mark 4:13 and parallels). Matthew is the only one of the three evangelists who puts the introduction of the parable

of the vineyard-keepers into the mouth of Jesus. In the other two, the word parabolē is part of the narrative, as indeed it is in most of the other occurrences of the word. On several occasions, however, the disciples ask about a parable, or about parables:

Matt. 13:10 "Why do you speak to them in parables?"
(Mark 4:10,
Luke 8:9)

Matt. 13:36 "Explain to us the parable of the
tares..."

Matt. 15:15 "Make clear to us the parable."
(Mark 7:17)

Luke 12:41 "Do you speak this parable to us or
to everyone?"

In two cases, it is again Matthew that places the question directly in the disciples' mouths. The other two cases are peculiar to the gospels in which they appear.

This may be enlightening, but not too encouraging if we are looking for conclusive proof in Jesus' own utterances that he designated some of his teaching as parables. The rest of the Synoptic tradition emphatically testifies that he did, however, and I think we may agree with its testimony. Particularly is this seen to be so when we look again at the Jewish backgrounds. The Aramaic term behind parabolē is probably mathlā, and behind them both is the Hebrew māshāl (verb form--māshal with the basic meaning "to liken"). In the LXX parabolē is frequently used to translate the noun, and sometimes the verb as well. For

example:

- Num. 23:7, 18 (Also 24:3, 15, 20, 21, 23) And he took up his discourse (māshāl-parabolē)
- Deut. 28:37 And you shall become a horror, a proverb (māshāl-parabolē), and a byword among all the peoples...
- I Sam. 10:12 Therefore it became a proverb (māshāl-parabolē), "Is Saul also among the prophets?"
- I Sam. 24:13 As the proverb (māshāl-parabolē) of the ancients says, "Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness."
- Psalm 44:14 Thou hast made us a byword (māshāl-parabolē) among the nations, A shaking-of-the-head among the peoples. (Similarly, Jer. 24:9).
- Psalm 49:4 I will incline my ear to a proverb (māshāl-parabolē), I will solve my riddle (hidāh) to the music of the lyre.
- Psalm 78:2 I will open my mouth in a parable (māshāl-parabolē) I will utter dark sayings (hidōth) from of old.
- Ezek. 16:44 Behold, every one who uses proverbs (māshal) will use this proverb (māshal-parabolē) about you saying "like mother, like daughter."
- Ezek. 17:2 Son of man, propound a riddle (hidāh) and speak an allegory (māshal-parabolē) to the house of Israel (Similarly, Ezek. 20:48, 24:3). Literally: "...riddle forth a riddle and mashal forth a mashal..." which the LXX reproduces in the first instance, but fails to reproduce in the case of parabolē since the Greek has no verb meaning "to parable forth").
- Micah 2:4 In that day they shall take up a taunt-song (māshāl-parabolē) against you, and wail with bitter lamentation. (Similarly, Hab. 2:6).

These references, as well as others that could be added, illustrate not only the inter-relationship of māshāl and parabolē, but also the variety of meanings that can be attached to them. Proverb, byword, allegory, taunt-song, and prophetic discourse are all so-described. In addition, synonymous parallelism invests māshāl-parabolē with the meaning of "riddle" (Psalm 78:2, Ezek. 17:2, above). The Greek translation of Sirach 47:17 makes the matter fully explicit by translating the Hebrew hidāh with the Greek parabolē. Another saying of Sirach for which the Hebrew is extant is pertinent at this point:

An understanding heart will think through a
parable (māshāl-parabolē),
And a hearing ear is the desire of a wise man.
(Sirach 3:29).

Sirach also says that the student of the Law and wisdom "will turn again and again to the obscurities of figures" (parabolē, 39:3). The Wisdom of Solomon preserves the sense of "byword" in 5:4:

This is the man we fools once laughed at,
And made a byword of reproach. (trans. Goodspeed.)

Similarly, Tobit's prayer (Tobit 3:4) expresses the feeling that Israel is a "proverb and a reproach among all the nations."

In the book of Proverbs parabolē is used but once in the LXX (1:6) to translate māshāl. At 1:1 and 26:7 the Greek paroimia appears: "the proverbs of Solomon." Elsewhere māshāl is translated by paideia (instruction, 25:1),

and douleia (slavery [?] 26:9). I Kings 4:32 (Heb. and LXX: 5:12) credits King Solomon with three thousand proverbs (māshāl-parabolē).

In the Synoptic Gospels the word parabolē does not have the same variety of meanings that it covers in the Old Testament. It has the meaning "proverb" in Luke 4:23, as we have seen. Some of the parables of Jesus can be understood as allegories, whether or not he intended it so (e.g. Sower: Mark 4:3-8, 14ff.; Tares: Matthew 13:24-30, 37ff.). The disciples are represented as puzzled by some of them, and whether or not they actually were the representation is not beyond the meaning of parabolē understood as "riddle." One does not find the meanings "byword" or "taunt-song" and none of the recorded utterances of Jesus in the Synoptics are identical with the "discourses" of Balaam. Beyond these considerations it is clear that some of the parables of Jesus, and especially certain ones that seem closely connected with the Kingdom of God, find their "unlabeled" counterparts in the Old Testament. Three of the most notable examples are:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| Judges 9:8-15 | Jotham's story about the trees seeking a king for themselves. |
| II Sam. 12:1-4 | Nathan's pointed accusation of David with his story of the rich man and the poor man's lamb. |
| Isaiah 5:1-7 | Isaiah's warning to Israel and Judah with his "song of the vineyard." |

This examination could be extended much further, but it should be clear by now, that on the basis of Jewish backgrounds we would have difficulty defining what a "true parable" is. If by the words "true parable" we have in mind some specific type to the exclusion of all others, then we are introducing our own definition of parable, and not letting our literature indicate to us what a parable is, or perhaps better, what parables are. The common feature of the various types is that some point of comparison is intended. Sometimes it is an obvious comparison ("like mother, like daughter" - Ezek. 16:44). At other times it requires a "thinking through" (Sirach 3:29). At still other times an additional comment brings home the point (Nathan's "You are the man" in II Sam. 12:7). The fact that some never "got the point" may be reflected by the words which Ezekiel reports were being said about him:

Ah Lord God! they are saying of me, "Is he not a maker of allegories?" (Literally: "Is he not a mashaling-forth mashalim?") - Ezek. 20:49, Heb. 21:5.

And no doubt the words of Sirach at 3:29 recall only too vividly that the sage does not always find the "understanding heart" and the "hearing ear" in his listeners.

Our purpose here, of course, is to apply the results of this examination of parabolē to the phrase "in parables" in Mark 4:11. The early church and the Synoptic evangelists quite evidently regarded the phrase as referring

to other utterances of Jesus which were designated by the same term. As a result, we have the statement in one form or other by all three evangelists that Jesus used parables to keep some people from knowing what he was talking about. Now it cannot be denied that the word parabolē refers to specific utterances of Jesus. Certainly this is true. But our investigation shows that parabolē need not always mean these utterances. The precise meaning of the word in a particular context must be determined from that context, if it is possible to determine it at all. Naturally we are dependent upon its range of meanings.

Another point, one of utmost importance for the interpretation of parables, may be made. In our survey we found no use of the words māshāl or parabolē which indicated that they describe a form of speech or utterance which is intended to conceal a meaning from anyone. It is true that a riddle, or proverb, or figure, or allegory may be difficult to understand; that is, those for whom it is spoken and to whom it is directed may not get the point immediately. But it is not because they were not intended to do so. The implication is that they do not have the necessary understanding (Prov. 1:6), the proper training (Sirach 38:31-39:3), a hearing ear and understanding heart (Sirach 3:29, cf. Ps. 49:4), or that they are rebellious

(Ezek. 17:12). In order to press home his point Isaiah challenges his hearers with a question, "Why did it yield wild grapes?" (5:4), and with a statement of intention that outrages the imagination: "I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it" (5:6). The point in presenting the māshāl is that the hearers may see what the speaker is driving at. The sages may have taken the time and effort to compose "parables" simply for their own sake (Sirach 13:26), but even then their purpose was the inculcation of wisdom and instruction, not its concealment. Even the "byword" carried the implication: "Let this be a lesson to you."

If the point of the parable is not communicated, it is not because the teller meant to keep it from being communicated. It is because the hearer lacks what it takes to "get it." Perhaps the most familiar modern analogy is the matter of "getting a joke." Jokes are told in order that people may see the humor in them. Some people are unable to see it and are puzzled when others laugh. They lack a "sense of humor," we say. But to explain a joke fully in order that someone may see the humor destroys the humor. Humor explained is not humor. The humor results from becoming personally aware of the incongruity, the absurdity, or the ridiculousness involved. A hint may be

helpful but a full explanation destroys the opportunity for the necessary exercise of one's own free will and insight. When that opportunity no longer exists the humor has been lost.

Something similar is true of the Kingdom of God, and this study of "parable" illuminates it. Jesus left people free to get the point though he certainly intended his parables to help them get it. Jesus could not "enter the Kingdom" for anyone. He called others to do it themselves. We conclude therefore, that of the meanings possible to the Hebrew māshāl, "riddle" is best suited to the context of Mark 4:11. A riddle is a case of parable in which, for the hearer, the point has not yet been made.

When we consider the matter of "seeing and hearing" further confirmation of this interpretation will be forthcoming.

THE "STUMBLING BLOCK"

In the course of our survey of the interpretation of Mark 4:11-12, it was mentioned by various scholars that the Greek word hina at the beginning of verse 12 was the chief difficulty, the "stumbling-block" of the passage, or the most obnoxious item contained in it. It cannot be denied that it presents an obstacle. The modern mind, especially, hesitates to credit Jesus with saying that certain of his hearers were not intended to understand. Yet

the attempts to retain the hina but to interpret it in some less offensive fashion have been unconvincing. Both Otto Piper²⁷ and Joachim Jeremias²⁸ interpret the hina as referring to the fulfilment of prophecy, but they do not support the interpretation with examples of such usage. The closest existing New Testament analogy in which hina is without a finite verb that can be supplied from the context is I Cor. 1:31: "in order that (it may come to pass) just as it is written..." But here the phrase on which the interpretation depends is clearly stated--gegaptai!

Moreover as Matthew Black has pointed out,²⁹ Mark wrote and intended not only the hina but also the mēpote. To "remove" the former and not deal adequately with the latter allows the difficulty to remain. What was true of attempts to retain the hina but to make it less offensive is also true of the mēpote; to suggest that it means "perhaps" or "unless" may be comforting but it does not appear convincing either. Even the suggestion of the Aramaic specialists that a mistranslation (along with interpretation) of the Aramaic de lies behind the hina does not deal with the mēpote clause, and solves the difficulty only for the form

²⁷Piper, Interpretation, Vol. I, p. 193.

²⁸Jeremias, Parables of Jesus, p. 14.

²⁹Black, Aramaic Approach, p. 155.

of the saying found in Luke. Black suggests that the saying as it came from Jesus may not have included the last line that Mark sets down. He proposes that there was a "Q" version of the saying, but does not pursue the argument to any great extent. I think it can be pursued.

It is usually assumed that at this point Matthew and Luke are dependent only upon Mark, and that both of them modify what Mark wrote in 4:10ff. Now it is probably true that they depended upon Mark and modified what he wrote. However, I think that there is good evidence to show that both Matthew and Luke had another version of the saying before them which also influenced them. There is a significant number of agreements between Matthew and Luke to justify this other conjectured source, probably "Q". A parallel arrangement will conveniently set the evidence before us.

Matt. 13:11..13

To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to those it has not been given..On account of this I speak to them in parables, because (hoti) seeing they do not see and hearing they do not hear nor understand.

Luke 8:10

To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest

in parables, in order that (hina) seeing they may not see and hearing they may not understand.

Mark 4:11-12

To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to those outside

everything is

in parables, in order that (hina) seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest perchance they should turn and it should be forgiven them.

Matthew has inserted another saying in the midst of this passage (verse 12): "For whoever has, it will be given to him and he will have plenty; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him." Though this saying appears elsewhere in other contexts (Mark 4:25 = Luke 8:18; Luke 19:26 = Matthew 25:29), here it gives a clue to Matthew's understanding of the saying into which he inserted it: Jesus used parables in order that he might "take away" from those who "did not have."

Matthew and Luke agree with each other on the following items.

1. Both have the same word order in the first clause.
2. Both have the infinitive "to know" (gnōnai).
3. Both have the plural "mysteries" (mystēria).³⁰
4. Both agree as to the length of the saying; that is, minus the final line found in Mark.

On each of these points both Matthew and Luke differ from Mark, who has a different word order in the first clause, does not have the verb "to know," has the singular mystērion, and, of course, has the additional line.

³⁰This agreement on the plural of "mysteries" may be weakened somewhat by variant readings: for Matthew the singular is supported by the greater number of Old Latin witnesses and by the most important Syriac MSS; for Luke the singular is supported by the Vulgate and some Old Latin MSS, as well as by the Syriac tradition. It may be, though, that these represent accommodation to the singular in Mark.

I submit then, that the evidence which is presented above indicates the presence of a version of the saying in "Q", and that Matthew and Luke had it as a source at this point as well as having Mark. The alternative to this is to suppose that both Luke and Matthew decided independently (1) to make identical changes in Mark's word-order; (2) to insert the infinitive gnōnai; (3) to change the singular mystērion to the plural mystēria; and (4) to cut off the final line.³¹ Since independent duplication of effort on all four counts seems highly unlikely, I present here a conjectured reconstruction of the saying in its "Q" version.

To you it has been given to know the
mysteries of the Kingdom of God, but to
the rest (tois loipois) they are in
parables, for³² seeing they do not see
and hearing they do not hear nor understand.

In Luke's version tois loipois stands in parallel to Mark's tois exō. Earlier we set forth the suggestion that "The rest of men" (abbreviated to "the rest") was a

³¹Another alternative will no doubt occur to those who wish to dispense with "Q": Matthew used Mark and introduced the modifications that suited his purpose, and then Luke used both Matthew and Mark, keeping some of Matthew's changes and making further modifications of his own.

³²That hoti can mean "for" in the sense of "for it is the case that..." is seen from the following references:
Matt. 7:13 "...for broad is the way..."
Matt. 11:29 "...for I am meek..."
Luke 9:12 "...for we are here in a desert place..."
Luke 13:31 "...for Herod wishes to kill you."
Luke 16:24 "...for I am tormented by this flame."
Similar additional references are listed in Arndt and Gingrich, Greek-English Lexicon, p. 594.

possible expression of the concept "outsiders." If such reasoning is correct, then the "Q" version may represent a literal translation of the conjectured Aramaic sharka de' enasha.

The chief difference between Luke and Matthew is that Matthew has hoti with indicative verbs, while Luke has hina with subjunctive verbs. The mood of the verbs depends, of course, upon the conjunctions with which they are used. It is the presence of the hoti in one instance and the hina in the other for which we need to account. Our argument implies that Matthew took hoti from the "Q" version of the saying, while Luke retained Mark's hina. But how did the two arise in the first place? Our guides in Aramaic backgrounds have suggested that behind both the hina and the hoti is the ambiguous Aramaic particle de. It is capable of being translated either as a conjunction or as a relative pronoun. As a conjunction de may express cause, result, or purpose. It is just at this point that the meanings of hoti and hina are somewhat blurred in Hellenistic Greek, though in the case of hoti the causal sense is dominant, and in the case of hina the final or purposive sense prevails. Black's rule of procedure is that where a failure of the Greek can be demonstrated, the assumption of mistranslation of an Aramaic original may be the best available explanation.³³

³³Black, Aramaic Approach, p. 143.

The presence of both hoti and hina in different versions of a saying of Jesus indicates a failure in the Greek. They are legitimate interpretations of the Aramaic de, but in this case the relative pronoun was intended. Some have felt that since the Targum of Isaiah 6:9-10 contains de as the relative pronoun, added support is gained for this interpretation. Jesus, they say, was alluding to the Isaiah passage in its Targum version. But, since a certain amount of conjecture is involved in the matter simply on the basis of "failure of the Greek," it seems better to me to let the basic conjecture stand or fall on its own, rather than to prop it up with another conjecture about what version of the scriptures Jesus used. It is easily pointed out, for instance, that the order of the saying in Matthew, Mark, and Luke reverses the order of the Hebrew original, the LXX, and the Targum. In the Gospels the "seeing" phrase comes before the "hearing" phrase, while in all three versions of the prophecy it is the other way around.

Substituting the relative pronoun "who" for the conjunctions solves the difficulty only for the shorter version of the saying which I submit was found in "Q". What then of the final line in Mark introduced by mēpote? I contend that on the basis of its own internal evidence the final line in Mark removes itself from the utterance that Jesus spoke, and must therefore be regarded as an expansion

of the saying in the process of its transmission. This contention is set forth, not because Mark's final line does not square with the solution provided by the relative pronoun, but because in this clause the relationship of forgiveness and repentance is exactly reversed from the order in which Jesus set it forth throughout his ministry. For Jesus, forgiveness preceded repentance, not the reverse. Men were to turn because God had brought his kingdom near, not in order that he might bring it near. On such a vital point, Jesus was not likely to "fall out of character" especially when speaking about those who had not responded to him, for the response Jesus desired may be described in terms of this vital point: The realization that God had forgiven and "thereupon it was man's business to believe, repent and do."³⁴ To support this contention, some evidence is needed, and the following is presented:

1. Teaching of Jesus which indicates that the divine forgiveness is antecedent to anything the receiver does by way of repentance:

Mark	1:15	"The kingdom is at hand, repent and believe..."
Mark	2:5	The paralytic is forgiven with no preliminaries.
Luke	7:47	Jesus indicates that forgiveness begets love in the forgiven (Parable also in Luke 7:41ff.).
Matt.	11:21 =	Luke 10:13 Mighty works were to inspire repentance.
Matt.	18:22	The willingness to forgive an infinite number of times means the willingness to forgive before one is sinned against.

³⁴Johnson, Jesus in His Homeland, p. 71.

Luke 19:9 Jesus brought salvation to Zaccaeus
and was thereby the initiator of
Zacchaeus' transformation.

2. Parables of the Initial Out-going of God to the Sinner
and his delight in doing so.

Matt. 20: 1ff. The generous master
Luke 14:17ff. The great feast
Luke 15:4ff. The seeking shepherd
Luke 15:8ff. The searching woman
Luke 15:11ff. The father who was so glad to have
his son come back that he made no
issue over repentance. He threw a
party.

3. Jesus own actions in accordance with his teaching:

Mark 2:16 Eating and drinking with tax-
collectors and sinners.
Matt. 11:19 = Luke 7:34 "the friend of tax-
collectors and sinners."
Luke 7:39 "...he would know that she is a
sinner."
Luke 19:7 "He has gone in to be the guest of
a man who is a sinner."

In addition, we draw attention again to our
discussion of the "Kingdom of God." It is precisely to the
world's unworthy people that Jesus says the Kingdom is being
given. As with Zacchaeus, the person to whom "salvation"
has come pursues a newly-adopted course of action because of
what has happened to him, not in order that it might happen.

So, we conclude that the final line of Mark 4:12
represents an expansion of Jesus' saying. In spite of the
fact that it shows Palestinian origin in its dependence
upon the Targum ("forgive" instead of "heal" as in the
Hebrew and LXX), it contradicts all that Jesus tried to make
clear. It seems rather to be an indication (of which Matthew

18:15-17 and Luke 17:3-4 are also examples) of how soon the early Church became unconcerned to preserve the radically unique teaching of its Lord about the relationship of forgiveness and repentance. Someone familiar with the Targum must have attached the final line to Jesus' original saying even before his teaching was carried to foreign soil. In so doing they exactly reversed what he taught and acted out in his own life.

THE CONTEXT

It remains to say something about the context in which this saying is found. We have already mentioned the change of audience introduced in verse 10. The fact that Mark introduces the saying with what appears to be a "link-phrase" for him, "and he said to them..." (kai elegen autois)³⁵ indicates further that what follows it was a saying with no set context. Verse 13 is introduced with an identical phrase. Verses 11-12 are thus set off from the context on which they are found both by the change of audience involved and by the phrases which precede and follow them. In addition, verses 10 and 13 make a connected unit in themselves, though the variant reading makes the

³⁵See Jeremias, Parables of Jesus, p. 11. Other examples of this construction in Mark are 2:27; 4:2, 21, 24; 6:10; 7:9; 8:21; 9:1.

matter more difficult. I see no reason for denying that the disciples (or others as well) may have inquired about the meaning of a parable or several parables, and therefore verses 10 and 13 may truly represent a situation (no doubt more than a single one) in which Jesus was asked and gave a reply. I confess that I doubt very much if his reply included an interpretation of a parable such as is given in Mark 4:14-20.

In Matthew the disciples' question is not about the parable but about the reason for the use of parables. The fact that the introductory question of the disciples and the introductory reply of Jesus are exact parallels, the presence of the phrase ou dedotai, and the insertion of verse 12 in the middle of the saying, seem to indicate that the whole passage is Matthew's arrangement.

Though it may be going too far to say so, it appears to me that Luke was embarrassed or at least puzzled by the whole passage in Mark as well as by the saying in "Q". Yet he was reluctant to omit it entirely. He therefore polished the episode, making the question in verse 9 and the answer in verse 11 fit each other. In the case of the saying about the mystery of the kingdom, he chose to give it in the shortest and perhaps most nearly "neutral" way. Tois loipois seems less harsh than tois exō, though it may also be urged that hina is more harsh than hoti.

Some question may be raised about the word dedotai. It seems to be generally assumed that it is the equivalent of the phrase "it has been revealed." Linguistically, I do not think that this can be supported, for nowhere have I found that apocalyptō and didōmi equal each other. The concordance to the LXX by Hatch and Redpath lists no instances in which didōmi is used to translate a Hebrew word meaning "to reveal." This raises the question whether "to give a mystery" is a Semitic idiom. The Old Testament and the intertestamental literature speak of both rāz and sōd as "revealed," but not as "given." On the other hand, the idiom which occurs in the "Q" version of our saying--"given to know the mysteries"--is found several times in the Qumran Literature:

- 1QH iv, 27 Thou hast given me knowledge of thy wondrous mysteries.
- 1QH vii, 26 In thy wondrous mysteries thou hast given me knowledge.
- 1QH xi, 10 Thou hast given them knowledge of thy true counsel
And made them wise in thy wondrous mysteries. (cf. xi, 4.)
- 1QS ix, 19 ...to guide them in knowledge and so to give them understanding in the marvelous mysteries...

At other points in the Qumran writings knowing and knowledge are connected with mysteries though the word "given" does not appear (1QH ii, 13; xii, 13; 1QS iv, 6; 1Qp Hab. vii, 5).

Wisdom of Solomon 2:22 speaks also of mysteries being "known."

In the rest of the New Testament, a mystery is never spoken of as "given." The Pauline (and "Deutero-Pauline") usage may be analyzed as follows:

1. Three times the mystērion is said to be "revealed" or "manifested," or occurs in a context governed by these words: Rom. 16:25; Col. 1:26; II Thess. 2:3-8.

2. Seven times the mystērion (or mystēria) is said to be "known": Rom. 11:25; I Cor. 13:2; Eph. 1:9, 3:3ff., 6:19; Col. 1:27, 2:2.

3. Nine times (counting the variant reading in I Cor. 2:1) the mystērion (or mystēria) is the object of other verbs, most frequently "announce," "speak," or "say": I Cor. 2:1, 2:7, 4:1, 14:2, 15:1; Col. 4:3; Eph. 5:32; I Tim. 3:9, 3:16.

From this review of the evidence it is seen that:

(1) The idiom "to reveal a mystery" is supported by the Old Testament, intertestamental literature, Qumran, and Paul; (2) The idiom "to know a mystery" is supported by Qumran and Paul; (3) The idiom "given to know a mystery" is supported only by Qumran; (4) The idiom "to give a mystery" is supported by none. This is not enough to prove that "to know a mystery" and "given to know a mystery" are characteristically Semitic, but it shows that they could be used along with the more frequent expression "to reveal a

mystery." The religious sense attached to the Hebrew verb yāda' and noun da'ath is adequate to account for the concept of "knowing" in the idiom. Thus, it may well be that according to usage, the phrases "to reveal a mystery" and "to give to know a mystery" are equivalent.

Mark's expression "to give a mystery" may be simply a condensation of the idiom. In that case it represents a usage of didōmi in which an infinitive is to be supplied from the context. Matthew 19:11 and John 19:11 are similar instances.³⁶ It may also represent an instance of the unique way in which Jesus employed familiar concepts.

The singular of mystērion seems preferable because it is more specific. It is the one supreme intention of God about which Jesus is speaking.

Our conclusions concerning Mark 4:11-12 have been emerging. It is time to state them fully. They are as follows:

1. While the terms mystērion and hoi exō occur in only one of the recorded utterances of Jesus, they are not in themselves sufficient evidence to warrant dismissing the utterance that contains them as unauthentic. It has been demonstrated that mystērion represents a familiar

³⁶Arndt and Gingrich, Greek-English Lexicon, p. 192. A brief discussion of the matter is included.

concept of Jewish "theologizing" and that the concept of "outsiders" had currency even though we cannot make final conclusions about the language used to express it.

2. The word parabolē may have a variety of meanings as its Hebrew counterpart māshāl attests. The māshāl is intended to make a point, and frequently its effectiveness in making the point depends upon the receptivity, perception, or perseverance of the hearers. The connotation "riddle" is best suited to our passage.

3. There were two versions of the saying in the body of Jesus' teaching that was preserved in the Church. Mark 4:11-12 represents one of them and common elements of Matthew 13:11, 13 and Luke 8:10 enable us to approximate the "Q" version. The existence of two versions adds to the probability that Jesus uttered some such saying.

4. The shorter form in "Q" gives the nearer approximation of what Jesus actually said.

5. The best available solution to the difficulty represented by hoti and hina is a conjectured mistranslation and misinterpretation of the Aramaic de.

On the basis of these conclusions I submit the following reconstruction of Jesus' statement:

To you who are my disciples, the mystery of the Kingdom of God has been given, but to the rest of men it is a riddle; they are those who see continually but do not perceive, and hear continually but do not understand.

His primary intention was to assure his disciples that God's purpose was for them and that they did participate in it. At the same time he offered a contrasting description of those who did not participate.

CHAPTER V
THE QUOTATION FROM ISAIAH

THE HEBREW AND SEPTUAGINT TEXTS OF ISAIAH 6:9-10

In the survey of the interpretation of Mark 4: 11-12, frequent reference was made to the Isaiah passage which is alluded to in verse 12. Strictly speaking, we cannot say that Isaiah 6:9-10 is quoted, though sometimes that word has been used. None of the three Synoptic evangelists gives the "quotation" portion of the saying in language and grammar which correspond to the Greek of the LXX. In John 12:40 also, there are significant differences. The Aramaicists have called our attention to some correspondence between the Markan version and the Targum of Isaiah 6:9-10. Only in Matthew's full quotation which follows the saying do we find an exact correspondence to the LXX. In Acts 28:26-27 the full quotation is used in connection with the disbelief of the Jews that Paul encountered in Rome. Except for the omission of one word, the passage exactly matches the LXX version. It has been suggested that Paul alludes to Isaiah 6:9-10 in Romans 11:8, but a comparison of texts shows that Paul is bringing together parts of Deut. 29:3 and Isaiah 29:10.

In Acts 28:24ff. and John 12:37ff. unbelief on the part of the Jews is a part of the context. Likewise, in Romans 11:20 and 23 unbelief is mentioned, though as we have said, Isaiah 6:9-10 is not the passage quoted in the earlier context. In Mark, Matthew and Luke, "the ones outside," "those," and "the rest" are not specifically identified as "unbelieving Jews" but it is difficult to suppose that these evangelists had anyone else in mind. Matthew's full statement that "with them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah" (13:14) shows the clearest similarity to the statements in John and Acts. In these three the Early Church's polemical use of Isaiah 6:9-10 is reflected most clearly. We may suppose that it is present in Mark and Luke also, even though less explicitly stated. We have already given our reasons for concluding that Jesus' saying was primarily an assurance to his own followers rather than an argument to account for the rejection of his mission by his contemporaries. It did indeed make mention of them and described them significantly in terms of seeing and hearing. As a genuine utterance of Jesus it was either a sure foundation or a sturdy prop for the theory and theology of the church. It is surely erroneous, in the face of other evidence to the contrary, to ascribe that theory and theology to Jesus himself.

The presence of Matthew 11:25 = Luke 10:21 among the sayings of Jesus may be thought to lend support to the argument that a "theology of predestination" did originate with Jesus. This passage has in itself raised many questions, both as to authenticity and meaning. The problem is not so much that God should "reveal" certain essential things to some, but that he should "hide" these things from others. It is outside our scope to deal with this passage in detail, but nevertheless it has direct bearing on what we are investigating. I suggest that the problem may be best illuminated by a detailed study of the Jewish understanding of divine "hiding." A preliminary study of the Old Testament indicates that only rarely is God spoken of as hiding things, but that these hidden things have to do with his purposes for Israel (Isaiah 48:6; Jer. 33:3; Psalm 119:19). More often God hides people or is described as a hiding-place for a psalmist or for Israel (Psalms 27:5, 32:7, 119:114; Isaiah 49:2). In the majority of cases, God is spoken of as hiding himself or his face from someone. In the Psalms the idiom frequently expresses the spiritual isolation felt by the psalmist (e.g. Psalm 27:9, 13:1, 30:7). According to the prophets, however, it represents God's reaction to the wickedness of Israel. Some of the most lucid statements are as follows:

- Micah 3:4 They will cry to the Lord, but he will
not answer them;
He will hide his face from them at
that time because they have made
their deeds evil.
- Isaiah 1:15 When you spread forth your hands,
I will hide my eyes from you.
- Isaiah 8:17 I will wait for the Lord who is hiding
his face from the house of Jacob.
- Deut. 31:17, 18 Then my anger will be kindled against
them and I will forsake them and hide
my face from them...and I will surely
hide my face in that day on account
of all the evil which they have done.
- Deut. 32:20 And he (Yahweh) said, "I will hide my
face from them,
I will see what their end will be;
For they are a perverse generation,
Children in whom is no faithfulness."
- Jer. 33:5 I have hidden my face from this city
because of all their wickedness.
- Ezek. 39:23 The house of Israel went into
captivity for their iniquity, because
they dealt so treacherously with me
that I hid my face from them (also
39:24,29).
- Isaiah 54:8 In overflowing wrath for a moment I
hid my face from you,
But with everlasting love I will
have compassion on you...
- Isaiah 57:17 Because of the iniquity of his
covetousness I was angry,
I smote him, I hid my face and
was angry.
- Isaiah 59:2 But your iniquities have made a
separation between you and
your God,
And your sins have hid his face
from you so that he does not
hear.

Isaiah 64:7 For thou hast hid thy face from us,
And hast delivered us into the hand
of our iniquities.

The Hebrew word which is used most frequently (though by no means exclusively) is nistar (root: str). Its basic meaning expresses hiding, covering, or concealing. A clue to understanding the expression in the above passages and other similar ones is given in Isaiah 59:2. There it is stated that the sins of Israel have covered the face of Yahweh. The expression is thus seen to represent one aspect of the theology of the prophets: Israel is unfaithful and sets itself in opposition to the purposes of God; as a result Israel is isolated from God; God hides his face. The synonymous parallelism of Hebrew poetry sometimes enforces this impression (e.g. Deut. 32:20; Isaiah 57:17, 64:7 above). Consequently, when Jesus speaks of God hiding "these things" he is making use of a familiar theological idiom. It carries the implication that those from whom God hides himself (and probably "things" also, though this does go beyond our evidence) stand in opposition to his purposes. It must also be taken into account that in this passage Jesus is praying. The language of prayer and the language of theology often express poetically what one would hesitate to defend on the basis of logical and analytical argument. The Psalms and the prophetic oracles of the Old Testament are testimony enough to this.

Much has been written about the relative severity of Isaiah 6:9ff. in the original Hebrew and in its Greek translation. Some scholars conclude that the LXX is less severe because according to it the people are responsible for their own blindness, deafness, and hardness of heart. In the Hebrew, they point out, the prophet (and behind him Yahweh) is responsible. Others have felt that both versions make the same point, though there are differences of expression. The following parallel arrangement allows us to make a line by line comparison:

Hebrew	Greek (LXX)
And I heard the voice of the Lord saying "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Behold me: send me." And He said, "Go. And you shall say to this people: 'Hear continually and understand not. See continually and know not.' Make fat the heart of this people, and make heavy its ears, and smear its eyes; lest it should see with its eyes, and with its ears it should hear, and with its heart it should understand, and should turn and there should be healing for it."	And I heard the voice of the Lord saying "Whom shall I send, and who will go to this people?" And I said, "Behold, I am I; send me." And He said, "Go and say to this people: 'with hearing you shall hear and not ever understand. And while seeing you shall see and not ever perceive.' For the heart of this people has become fat, And they have heard heavily with their ears, and they have closed their eyes; lest they should see with the eyes and hear with the ears and understand with the heart, and should turn and I shall heal them."

It is readily seen that in the Hebrew original the prophet does indeed receive a divine command to "make fat, make heavy, and smear." In the Greek the passive verb form epachunthē ("has been made fat") likewise suggests the divine action by its circumlocution, even though the next two verbs are active with the people as the subject. Perhaps the most significant difference between the two versions is in the words that Isaiah is to speak to the people. In the Hebrew the grammatical form is that of negative command or prohibition, but it is an immediate prohibition: The negative particle 'al' is used with the imperfect.¹

Hear continually, and while doing so
you shall not understand.
See continually, and while doing so
you shall not know.

In the LXX the grammatical construction is a double negative which makes the prohibition final and complete:

With hearing you shall hear and not ever
understand,
And while seeing you shall see and not ever
perceive.

At this point, at least, the LXX is the more severe.

Regardless of the differences of expression, the net literal effect of both the Hebrew and Greek versions is a definition of the prophet's immediate task as one of purpose. He is to "fatten the hearts," "deafen the ears,"

¹Compare Exodus 20:3ff.: lo' with imperfect="thou shalt not (ever)..."

and "blind the eyes" of his hearers. The rest of the sixth chapter re-inforces this impression. Isaiah is to proclaim his message until cities have no inhabitants, houses are empty, and the land is desolate. This is what God wants, and the prophet is to accomplish it.

Taken by itself, Isaiah's account of his own prophetic mission seems to mean this. But does it mean this when placed alongside the rest of Isaiah's prophetic activity? In actual fact, Isaiah seems to have spent his life earnestly attempting to make his people realize the "purpose of the Holy One of Israel." He urged them to wash themselves and make themselves clean and to cease their evil and unjust ways (1:15ff.). This was the pre-requisite to acceptable worship. He held out the plea and the threat:

If you are willing and obedient,
 you shall eat the good of the land;
 But if you refuse and rebel,
 you shall be devoured by the sword;
 for the mouth of the Lord has spoken
 (Isaiah 1:19-20).

In his "song of the vineyard" he called for the hearers to exercise their judgment in the matter (5:3), provoked their imaginations by a gross exaggeration (5:6), and concluded by saying that the whole thing applied to Israel and Judah (5:7). Through him a sign was given to Ahaz (7:10ff.). The names of his children were evidently intended to embody the prophetic word (7:3, 8:3), and he specifically stated that

he and his children were "signs and portents in Israel from the Lord of hosts" (8:18). He himself went "naked and barefoot for three years as a sign and a portent against Egypt and Ethiopia" (20:3), and drew the conclusion that if Assyria overcame those powerful allies in whom Judah trusted, what was to become of Judah?

In view of these things, it is best to regard the sixth chapter as Isaiah's bitter and disappointed evaluation of his own career in the prophetic service of Yahweh. The receptive senses of his people had failed to work. They neither saw, nor heard, nor knew, nor understood, and the frustrated Isaiah concluded that his divinely-appointed mission to them had confirmed the failure.

Isaiah's use of "the receptive-senses" idiom to describe his hearers is representative of a good part of the prophetic tradition. The prophetic oracle frequently began with the appeal "Hear the word of the Lord" (e.g. Amos 3:1; Hosea 4:1; Is. 1:10; Jer. 2:4; Ezek. 6:3; Is. 66:5). Obtuseness was described by more than one prophet as a failure to hear, sometimes supplemented by the failure to see.

Jer. 5:21 Hear this, O foolish and senseless
 people
 who have eyes, but see not,
 who have ears, but hear not.

Ezek. 12:2 Son of man, you dwell in the midst
of a rebellious house, who have
eyes to see, but see not, who have
ears to hear, but hear not;

Is. 42:18ff. Hear, you deaf;
 and look, you blind, that you may see!
 Who is blind but my servant,
 or deaf as my messenger whom I send?

Is. 32:3 Then the eyes of those who see will not
 be closed, and the ears of those who
 hear will hearken.

Is. 43:8 Bring forth the people who are blind,
 yet have eyes,
 Who are deaf, yet have ears!

The sages of Israel prefaced some of their utterances with the invitation to "Hear instruction" (Prov. 1:8; 4:1, 10; 8:33; 23:19), and encouraged attentiveness to what they said (Sirach 6:33ff.). One of their proverbs with a theological bent declared:

The hearing ear and the seeing eye,
 the Lord has made them both (Prov. 20:12).

With these things in the background, it is not at all unusual that Jesus should have selected the senses of sight and hearing for use in his teaching.

"SEEING" AND "HEARING" SAYINGS

The Synoptic Gospels record numerous sayings in which Jesus speaks about "seeing" or "hearing" or both. A list of these utterances follows here, with an indication of parallels where there are such. A code letter at the margin shows the audience to which the context reports each one was addressed. D stands for disciples, P for

people in general, and O for those who were hostile to Jesus. The type of audience is noted primarily as a point of interest rather than as a basis for interpreting the saying. Perhaps it is significant to point out that those hostile to Jesus appear only rarely as the audience.

- | | | |
|--|--|--------|
| Mark 4:9 (Matt. 13:9, Luke 8:8) | Who has ears to hear, let him hear (follows the parable of the sower). | P |
| Matt. 11:15 | The one who has ears, let him hear (follows the statement that John is Elijah). | P |
| Matt. 13:43 | The one who has ears, let him hear (follows the explanation of the parable of the tares). | D |
| Mark 4:23 | If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear (follows the statement about hidden things being brought to light). | P or D |
| Luke 14:35 | The one who has ears to hear, let him hear (follows the statement that no-good salt is thrown out). | P |
| (variant readings of this saying are found in Mark 7:16; Luke 12:21; 21:4; Matt. 25:29). | | |
| Mark 4:24 = | Luke 8:18 See what you hear (Luke: see, therefore, how you hear) | P or D |
| Mark 7:14 = | Matt. 15:10 Hear me, everyone, and understand (Matt. Hear and understand). | P |
| Mark 8:17-18 | Do you not know nor understand? Has your heart been hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? | D |
| Luke 7:22 = | Matt. 11:4 Go and report to John what you see and hear...And blessed is he who has not been scandalized at me. | P |

Luke 11:28	Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it.	P
Luke 12:54	Whenever you see a cloud rising in the west, right away you say "A rain-storm is coming"...(cf. Matt. 16:3).	P
Luke 16:28...31	They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them...If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if anyone should rise from the dead.	O
Luke 7:24ff.= Matt. 11:7ff.	What did you go out into the desert to behold?...But what did you go out to see?...But what did you go out to see?	P
Luke 10:16	He who hears you hears me. (Luke's account of sending out the seventy... cf. Matt. 10:14).	D
Luke 8:21	My mother and my brothers--these are the ones who hear the word of God and do it (cf. Mark 3:34).	P
Matt. 10:27	What you hear in the ear, proclaim from the housetops (cf. Luke 12:3).	D
Mark 8:15	Keep your eyes open! Watch out for the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.	D
Luke 10:23f.	= Matt. 13:16f.	D
Blessed are the eyes which see what you see.	Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.	
For I say to you that many prophets and kings wished to see the things you see and they did not see; and to hear the things you hear, and they did not hear.	For verily I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things you see and they did not see; and to hear the things you hear and they did not hear.	
Luke 6:47ff.	= Matt. 7:24ff.	D
Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them...	Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them...	
But the one who hears and does not do...	And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them...	

Luke 11:31
The Queen of the South
shall be raised up in
the judgment with the
men of this generation
and she shall judge
them. For she came
from the ends of the
earth to hear the
wisdom of Solomon, and
behold, a greater thing
than Solomon is here.

=

Matt. 12:42 P & O
The Queen of the South
shall be raised up in
the judgment with this
generation
and she shall judge
it. For she came
from the ends of the
earth to hear the
wisdom of Solomon, and
behold, a greater thing
than Solomon is here.

We said in our discussion of the Kingdom of God that the response Jesus expected from men was often expressed in terms of "seeing" and "hearing." He asked men to use their ears, and though it may well be that the Gospels over-apply the phrase "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" and its variations,² there is no reason to restrict it to a single usage.

The words which men heard from Jesus were to result in "doing" on their part (Matt. 7:24 = Luke 6:48). Jesus approved of the person who heard and did and described such a one as "discerning" or "perceptive" (Greek: phronimos). Elsewhere also Jesus commended those whose "doing" (Greek: poieō) was appropriate to the situation in which they found

²The variant readings in Mark 7:16, Luke 12:21, 21:4, and Matt. 25:29, as well as the repeated phrase of John and Seer (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; cf. 13:9): "The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches" witness to the popularity of this phrase. They also illustrate its alleged effectiveness in emphasizing a point. In the Revelation it is almost a post-script version of "Thus says the Lord."

themselves (the faithful slave, Matt. 24:45f. = Luke 12:42f.: the rascally steward, Luke 16:8). Whatever else may be made of the parable of the virgins (Matt. 25:1ff.), it is because they recognized the nature of the situation in which they were involved and prepared for it by taking the proper action, that five of them were described as "discerning."

Three "seeing" and/or "hearing" sayings are also utterances about blessedness. They include: one who is not offended at Jesus (Matt. 11:6 = Luke 7:23); those who hear the word of God and keep it (Luke 11:28); and those who in the present time witness what men of former times desired to see and hear (Matt. 13:16f. = Luke 10:23f.). In the first two of these sayings, Jesus invited men to see and hear, and in almost the same breath set the highest approval upon them if they realized the significance of what came to their ears and eyes. What was it to which Jesus directed the seeing and hearing of men? In Matt. 11:5 the outward things to which Jesus directed the eyes and ears of John's disciples were his "mighty works." In view of Mark 3:22ff. this means that Jesus wanted men to understand that the mighty works were evidence of the power of God operating through his person. The further statement does indeed fasten the attention on himself. Looking at Jesus and his actions, and listening to him may result in "being offended" at him. In Luke 11:28 the attention of men is drawn to the

"word of God." They are to hear it and keep it. In this context Jesus directed attention away from himself after a woman in the crowd has focused it upon him.

The third "blessedness" saying (Matt. 13:16f. = Luke 10:23f.) is applicable to all men of Jesus' generation, though both Matthew and Luke apply it to the disciples. Matthew's version credits the disciples with "seeing-eyes" and "hearing-ears"; that is, it implies that they are "blessed" because they understand the significance of what they see and hear. Luke's version and the latter part of the saying in both Matthew and Luke indicate that sight and hearing have the sense of "witnessing" in this saying, rather than the sense of "becoming aware." Men of former times did not see and hear because they lived too early. Men of the present generation live at the opportune time, for the long-hoped-for "things" are now taking place.

Whether it is said that men have the opportunity to witness something, or whether they are invited to become aware of something, there is an entity to which their eyes and ears are directed. In other sayings also an entity is named. Luke 16:29-31 implies that men are to listen to the Scriptures. In Matthew 7:24ff. Jesus says that they are to listen to his own words. Presumably, the saying "he who has ears to hear, let him hear" refers to

whatever preceded it, but since it is impossible to know what instances are a genuine application, its chief value is in itself alone.

In the sayings themselves, the entities which Jesus wanted people to see and hear are left undefined, though the context of each saying as well as the context of Jesus' whole ministry often gives a broad hint concerning their identification. What it is about Jesus himself that may offend people is left to be inferred, but the power of God is at work. What it is in the "Word of God" that is to be heard and kept is not made precise, but "hearing and keeping" stands in contrast to pious statements about Jesus himself. What men are to listen to in Moses and the prophets is not explained, but the implication is that "repentance" and "persuasion" are to result. What it is about Jesus' own words that men are to hear is not specifically stated, but an active response to them is desired. The "things" that may now be witnessed receive no elucidation, but it is plain that they are matters dear to the heritage of Israel. Perhaps they are best illuminated by the phrases of Luke 2:25 and 38: "The consolation of Israel" and "the redemption of Jerusalem." The righteous Simeon is credited with saying that his eyes had seen the salvation of God (Luke 2:30).

The total impression of Jesus' ministry suggests that the Kingdom of God is the specific context within which

the seeing and hearing sayings are to be placed, though the Kingdom is neither mentioned by name nor explicitly referred to in the sayings themselves. It seems to be conspicuous by its absence. This should not be surprising in view of the saying found in Luke 17:20: "The Kingdom of God does not come with careful watching. Nor will they say 'See, here it is' or 'There it is!'" The Kingdom itself is not something that can be seen.

Though we may assume that the utterances about seeing and hearing have the Kingdom as their background, it would be better if a connection could be established. It may be shown that a connection does exist. Though the Kingdom itself cannot be seen, there is something about the Kingdom that can be seen and taken into account. In Luke 12:54ff. Jesus speaks of men being able to see and take into account the clouds and wind which indicate the weather. Yet they are incompetent to take into account "this time" (Greek: kairos). The initial announcement of Jesus (Mark 1:15) concerned the fulfilment of the time (kairos) and the near approach (or arrival) of the kingdom. This gives a hint that what Jesus expects men to see is concerned with the Kingdom of God, even though the Kingdom itself is not the object of their seeing.

This hint receives support from another combination of terms in two of Jesus' sayings. Again an

arrangement in parallel is the most helpful procedure:

Luke 11:31
The Queen of the South
will be raised up
in the judgment
with the men of this generation
and she will judge them.
For she came from the ends of
the earth to hear
the wisdom of Solomon,
and behold
a greater thing
than Solomon
is here.

Luke 11:32
The Ninevite men
will be resurrected
in the judgment
with this generation
and they will judge it.
For they
repented
at the preaching of Jonah,
and behold
a greater thing
than Jonah
is here.

In these sayings the plot, characters and action parallel each other. An identical point is made in each: "A greater thing...is here." The queen's "coming to hear" is co-ordinate to the Ninevites' "repenting." Both were actions appropriate to the situations confronting those who performed them. Both are held out as descriptions of appropriate action for men of "this generation" when presently confronted by "a greater thing."

Again the clue to the identification of the "greater thing" comes from the initial announcement of Jesus: "the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the good news." Men are to repent because the kingdom is at hand. In Luke 11:32 they are to repent because "a greater thing" is here. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the greater thing is in fact the Kingdom of God. Repentance and repenting (metanoia, metanoēō) elsewhere in Jesus' sayings are inclusive descriptions of what Jesus asked

men to do and evidently felt that they could do (Luke 13:3, 5; 15:7,10; Matt. 11:21; in addition to Mark 1:15). In Luke 11:32 where "hearing" is co-ordinate to "repenting" in its parallel saying, it acquires an inclusive, almost technical sense, and in itself constitutes another description of the total response otherwise described as repentance.

The fact that "hearing" (and "seeing" as well) is usually completed by another verb of definite action, warns that the inclusive sense mentioned above may not always be ascribed to it.³ In Matthew 7:24f. hearing may be completed by doing or not doing. Jesus recognized that seeing and hearing might result in "being scandalized" (Matthew 11:4ff.). Luke 12:54ff. suggests that "seeing" needs to be complemented by the ability to discern the significance of what one sees. Hearing the word of God and keeping it (Luke 11:28) is commended, so evidently "hearing and not keeping" is a possibility. The conclusion of the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus implies that repentance is to result from the hearing of "Moses and the prophets."

³It is doubtful that what I have called "the inclusive sense" is to be found in any other saying. In Luke 11:31 the verb "to come" is used with "to hear" but not in a complementary sense as is true of the "hearing" which leads to "doing" or "not doing." I think the equivalence of hearing and repenting may be maintained in this saying.

The exhortations to "hear and understand" (Mark 7:14) and to "look at what you hear" (Mark 4:24) also urge something in addition to the physical use of the ear. Finally, in Mark 4:12 the failure of the "outsiders" is not in terms of seeing, but in terms of "knowing" (Hebrew yāda' also means "perceive"); not in terms of hearing, but in terms of "understanding." Another allusion to the Old Testament (reminiscent of both Jer. 5:21 and Ezek. 12:2) also invites more than just the simple use of the eyes and ears:

Having eyes do you not see,
and having ears do you not hear?⁴
(Mark 8:18)

The above drawing-together of sayings illustrates the way in which Jesus generally spoke about seeing and hearing. He used these senses to call for awareness and invite men to "get the point" of the events that were taking place around them. Their consequent awareness was to result in appropriate action described by an auxiliary and

⁴The context in which this saying is found seems so confused that the original application of the saying is impossible to ascertain. Mark applies it to the disciples, and perhaps it was applied to them by Jesus, but an extended argument which relates one loaf of bread in the boat, the leaven of the Pharisees, five loaves, five thousand people, twelve baskets of leftovers, and seven loaves, four thousand people and seven baskets of left-overs is not characteristic of Jesus. If the "leaven of the Pharisees" means their desire for a sign, and the disciples failed to get the significance of Jesus' warning about asking for signs, it is possible that Mark 8:17-18 was spoken to them as a rebuke.

complementary verb. That the resulting action might not always be favorable, Jesus acknowledged, as the mē poiōn of Matthew 7:26 and the mē skandalisthē of Matthew 11:6 imply. Jesus knew from experience that people did not always "do" even though they asked what to do (Mark 10:17ff.), and that some were indeed "scandalized" on account of him (Mark 6:3).

It is not clear from the utterances themselves whether Jesus credited the failure of some to see and hear to a lack of perception or to a stubborn refusal to admit the significance of what their eyes and ears brought to them. Most of the sayings leave us free to assume the former, but Luke 11:31 = Matthew 12:42 and Luke 16:29...31 imply the latter. "Blind guide," "fools and blind men," and "blind Pharisee" are reserved for those who on other grounds are known to have opposed Jesus (Matthew 23:16ff.). But since the material in which they occur is peculiar to Matthew, and may reflect his antipathy, or that of one of his sources, it is precarious to build any case upon it.

Two sayings which Matthew and Luke have in common, though in different contexts, are related to this matter. One concerns the "blind leading the blind" (Luke 6:39 = Matthew 15:14). The other is about "the Mote and the Beam" (Luke 6:41ff. = Matthew 7:3ff.). In the Lukan context both are spoken to disciples. In Matthew also, both are addressed

to disciples, but the saying about the blind leading the blind is applied specifically to the Pharisees. No application is made in Luke but since the Pharisees were religious leaders and the Gospels show that Jesus' aims were in conflict with their own, Matthew's application is quite possible. The other utterance contains the designation "hypocrite" which in this case seems to mean "a misguided person who is manifestly unfitted for what he is trying to do." This does not fit the disciples, and probably we may assume that a change of audience has occurred in the transmission of the saying. What was originally addressed by Jesus to the scribes or Pharisees became in the Church an exhortation to Christians.⁵ If so, then this is another of Jesus' sayings in which "seeing" appears as a pointed description to certain contemporaries. It includes a subtle appeal to "see clearly" and implies that clear seeing will result if those concerned will realize and remedy their own condition.

Several of the passages listed at the beginning of this section have not been mentioned in the discussion. A brief explanation is perhaps in order. In the cases of Luke 10:16 and 8:21, another version of each exists

⁵See the discussion of "Change of Audience" by Jeremias, Parables of Jesus, pp. 23ff.; esp. p. 27-28.

(Matthew 10:40 and Mark 3:34, respectively) in which the word "hear" does not appear. Matthew 10:27 and Luke 12:3 seem to be variations of the same saying, or parts of the same saying, but are too ambiguous to be very illuminating. Luke 7:24ff. = Matthew 11:7ff. may be another instance in which Jesus is attempting to help his hearers get the significance of something they have seen--in this case the person of John the Baptist. While it is true that much needs to be clarified about the relationship of Jesus and John, Jesus may have felt that if the significance of John was made clear, the significance of his own words and actions would be more readily available to the perceptive. To develop this here, however, is beyond our purpose.

It has not been my intention to force these "seeing" and "hearing" sayings into a system of classification, and I make no claim to having exhausted their significance. One general impression is clear, I think, as already noted. Most often, Jesus' utterances which employ "seeing" and "hearing" are appeals to his listeners to get the point of what he is saying, to take note of what is happening, or to become aware of the significance of the time in which they are living. By them Jesus says in effect: "There is more to what you are witnessing than appears on the surface, but you must get its significance for yourselves even though I am doing all I can to help you to get it."

Affinity exists between the sayings which have this emphasis and the use of parable. A parable is told in order that the hearers may get the point. In Jesus' use of them his subject matter required that the hearers get it for themselves. Likewise, his appeals to people to "see" and to "hear" were appeals for them to get the point for themselves. If the point was not understood the subject matter continued to be a riddle, and those for whom it was intended did not really "see" or "hear" it.

In Mark 4:12, then, Jesus gives an additional description of those whom he has already contrasted to his own disciples. It is a description in terms of a familiar Old Testament idiom. At the same time it is a description in terms of a contemporary appeal that Jesus repeatedly made.

CONCLUSION

We have concluded that Mark 4:11-12 is to be regarded primarily as an assurance of Jesus to his followers that they were participating in God's gracious purpose for men. At the same time the saying described those who remained non-participants: they were those to whom the gracious purpose remained a riddle; they "saw" and "heard" but failed to understand or refused to be moved by what came to their eyes and ears.

When so regarded, the saying loses some of its traditionally problematic aspects. First of all, it ceases to have bearing upon the interpretation of Jesus' parables, for it is not a statement intended to explain why he used parables. Secondly, no longer can it be employed to support an interpretation of Jesus which presents him as one who deliberately attempted to prevent some of his hearers from understanding his teaching. This does not mean that the parables at once become lucidly clear, but it does mean that one obstacle to their interpretation is removed. Neither does it explain why some people of Jesus' day responded favourably to him while others were either repelled by him or were indifferent to him. It does deny that he ever

operated on the basis of a theology of divine hardening. The interpretation of the parables and the effort to understand more clearly the reaction of Jesus' contemporaries to him will continue to offer rewarding areas for investigation.

The purpose of this concluding section is to deal briefly with some of the issues raised by the investigation. Four have been selected for consideration here. The first three are more directly related to matters of interpretation arising from the passage itself. The fourth is an attempt to make a relevant application of the main conclusions to the contemporary proclamation of the Gospel.

THE RELATION OF JESUS' TEACHING TO HIS TOTAL MISSION

Our conclusions imply that Jesus went about his work in a straight-forward way. He himself had an awareness and a dedication to a task that he wanted to communicate to others. Furthermore, he wanted men to know with assurance where they stood with respect to the "event" that he was announcing. Jesus designated this "event" by the phrase "kingdom of God." In attempting to set forth what Jesus himself understood by this much-defined term we have added yet another definition: the divine action in initiating a gracious fellowship with and among men. Viewed from the positive side, there are three aspects to the total mission of Jesus: (1) He wanted men to become aware of the divine action; (2) He wanted men to respond favourably to this

divine action; and, (3) In the face of some contrary opinions, he wanted those who had responded to him to be assured that the divine action did mean all he said it meant and all that his followers were experiencing. This third aspect has a negative side, for the need to assure followers implies controversy with those of contrary opinion. The implication finds open expression in the conflict stories of Mark 2:1-3:6, and 7:1-15.

What part in this total mission is occupied by Jesus' teaching? First of all it may be said that he appealed to the total person. Teaching was his appeal to the minds and understanding of men. Thus it stood alongside proclamation, the "mighty works" of healing, and the activity of associating with outcasts as one of the ways in which he sought to secure the desired response from men. At the same time, the evidence of the Gospels shows that teaching is the most prominent of the "methods of approach" to men that Jesus used. The terms "prophet," "physician," and "friend of publicans and sinners" are applied to Jesus, but most often he is addressed as "teacher." Indeed, it may be said that the reactions to Jesus' proclamation, mighty works, and friendship with outcasts, whether amicable or hostile, presented opportunities for teaching and instruction.

We have said that Jesus went about his work in a

straight-forward way. His teaching was a genuine appeal to the understanding and perception of men. It was not a series of propositions leading unswervingly to a logical conclusion, but an invitation to decision based upon the inward discernment and assent of the hearer. Sherman Johnson has written:

Through everything Jesus said about oaths, divorce and the Sabbath law, runs the conviction that man is a free but responsible moral agent. This does not mean that he is perfect; it does not rule out the possibility that in man's freedom he might choose sin or the fact that his freedom is seriously hampered by his sin. Jesus knew that men were sinners and did not minimize the fact; on the other hand, he did not concentrate on the weakness of man's will--he was more interested in God's strengthening love--and he seems to have believed that freedom should be exercised.¹

It seems to me that this judgment can be extended to include all that Jesus taught, as well as all that he did. Our investigation of Mark 4:11-12 has confirmed this. Jesus set forth the intention and already initiated activity of God so that people might realize what it was and respond to it. If they so desired, or if they were indifferent, people were free to let his words and deeds remain as a "riddle." In the tradition of the prophets and sages he invited men to use their eyes and ears, but the significance of what they saw and heard was something which they must realize for themselves. Much as Jesus desired the response of men, he

¹Johnson, Jesus in His Homeland, p. 69.

could not make it for them, nor would he force it from them. Nevertheless, he kept setting the invitation before them.

The only alternative to the impression of an appeal to men conducted on the basis of men's freedom to accept or reject that appeal is to postulate the world's most monumental exhibition of play-acting. The logical conclusion to such a postulation is that the play-acting must ultimately be ascribed to God Himself. Or else it must be said that Jesus was a deluded, misguided product of a meaningless heritage.

Thus far we have spoken only of Jesus' use of teaching in presenting his mission to his contemporaries. Another aspect of teaching which is still intimately related to his mission is that of instructing his followers. The "change of audience" which seems to have occurred as the Early Church applied Jesus' words to its own members complicates the matter of ascertaining what things Jesus said specifically to his disciples. But the Gospels do indicate that he instructed them privately and, even if we allow for the presence of a theological secrecy-motive of the Early Church or of the evangelists, such instruction is well-attested. The fact that the word "disciples" is used implies that they were those to whom teaching was given.

Even in the circle of disciples the atmosphere of freedom to accept or reject the significance of what Jesus

said God was doing was preserved. Judas Iscariot was free to betray. Jesus compelled no disciple to follow him to the Cross, and none went with him. To this extent Austin Farrer's suggestion (liberated from the framework in which he confines it) is correct: Jesus' teaching is comment beforehand upon the greatest of his acts, and not even disciples fully understand it until after the act itself has taken place.²

PREDESTINATION TO "HEARING" AND "SEEING"?

The preceding section spoke of the atmosphere and attitude of freedom within which Jesus conducted his work and of his exhibition of the conviction that his hearers were able, if not always willing, to exercise their own judgment about his words and actions. Earlier it was said that on the basis of our conclusions about Mark 4:11-12 this passage cannot be used to support an interpretation of Jesus which pictures him as intentionally concealing the meaning of his message. Neither can it be employed as evidence that Jesus held a theology of divine hardening. Consequently, it is obvious that a negative answer would be forthcoming to the question: Did Jesus consider that God predestined some to "hear" and "see" and others to belong to the "deaf" and "blind" group of outsiders?

Since the idea of divine hardening with apparent intent to prevent those hardened from participating in the

²Farrer, A Study in St. Mark, p. 246.

divine purpose is present in the Scriptures, some scholars are reluctant to deny its presence and influence in the teaching of Jesus. Morton Smith, for instance, criticizes Vincent Taylor's treatment of Mark 4:11-12 on the ground that Taylor is attempting to harmonize the passage with modern notions of what Jesus should have done.³ We may grant the necessity for warning against the removal of contradictions between what Jesus did and modern notions of what he should have done. The point is that the Gospels give evidence of the way in which Jesus actually did conduct his ministry, and the conclusive impression of this evidence is that he made a straight-forward appeal to those around him, in the conviction that they could respond if they would. It would appear then, that either one must accept the net impression of Jesus' practice and find some adequate explanation for the relatively few pieces of evidence which allegedly contradict the net impression, or else one must affirm that Jesus conducted his ministry on the basis of a curious alternation between two opposing theological views of both God and men. Another possible alternative is to assume a theological position, either upon the side of "free-will" or upon the side of "predestination," and interpret the evidence of the Gospels to suit the position. If one does this, at least he cannot be accused of straddling the fence!

³Morton Smith, "Comments on Taylor's Commentary on Mark," Harvard Theological Review, Vol. 48 (1955), pp. 30-31.

The fact that theories involving predestination were current in the Early Church has led some to conclude that they were based upon the theology of Jesus himself.⁴ That the saying which we have been investigating was understood to imply a theory of predestination is plain from the ways in which the Gospel writers employ it. For Mark, especially, the prevention of seeing and hearing was further intended to prevent forgiveness. A related though not identical theory was set forth by Paul in his letter to the Romans. The main difference between what Paul said and what Mark understood this saying of Jesus to mean is that Paul's statement is conditional while Mark's has no condition attached. Paul maintains that his fellow-countrymen have not "stumbled so as to fall" (Rom. 11:11), but only in order that salvation might come to the Gentiles. At the same time Paul's argument seems to alternate between the assurance that God planned it this way, and the allowance that "if they do not remain in their unbelief they will be grafted in again" (11:23). Whether the condition is based upon the purpose of God or upon the possible future belief of the Jews, Paul differs from Mark. In Mark the failure to see and hear which in turn prevents forgiveness is unqualified.

⁴For example, B. Wiberg, "Forherdelsestanken i evangelierne" The Idea of Obduracy in the Gospels, Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift, Vol. 21 (1958), pp. 16-32; Cited in New Testament Abstracts, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1958), article No. 15, p. 15.

A similar argument is found in the fourth Gospel. In John 12:37 it is said that the people did not believe in Jesus. The next few verses argue that they were not able to believe because they had been blinded and hardened. Then the allowance is made that some did believe, but not openly because "they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (12:42-43).

In considering the "quotation" from Isaiah, we discussed Matthew 11:25 = Luke 10:21 as a passage which might be taken to imply that Jesus held a theology of predestination. On the basis of a preliminary investigation of the idiom of divine "hiding" we concluded that it is a theological expression which poetically represents the rejection of the divine purpose on the part of those from whom God "hides." Another illustration from the words of Jesus is to be found in Luke 19:42ff. Jesus says of Jerusalem:

If you knew on this day, even you, the things
that make for peace--
But now they are hid from your eyes...
...you did not know the time of your visitation.

The parallelism of expression looks at the matter from both angles. On the one hand the people did not know. On the other hand "the things that make for peace" were hidden from their eyes (cf. Jer. 33:5).⁵ The other side of the matter

⁵Though this is not the place to develop the matter, the language of divine "visitation" (Hebrew verb: pāgad; Greek verb: episkopeō) in connection with kairos (above) and "deliverance" (e.g. Psalm 106:4) gives additional illumination to Jesus' mission.

is represented by the word "revealed." It is the theological expression which poetically represents the response of those who accept and participate in God's purpose. An expression which is nearly equivalent to "thou hast revealed" is "it is given" in Mark 4:11. Both poetically ascribe the experience of men to the credit of God. Viewed as the grateful and devout evaluation of one's consciousness of "grace" this is legitimate theologizing. Hardened into a doctrine about man and God, it misrepresents both, for it judges where judgment is uncalled for, and sets a limit upon God's purpose. It is pertinent to note that theories of predestination originate with and are upheld by the "in-groups."

Theories of predestination are religious man's attempts to satisfy his own cravings for a final explanation. They represent the human effort to solve the eternal problem of authority by setting the sovereign and providential fore-knowledge of God in place of God himself. They appeal to a postulated characteristic of God rather than to his action, by which he most adequately describes himself. One of the most powerful points that Jesus made is that God's action frequently contradicts the doctrines that men have formulated about him, even though those formulations of doctrine are based originally upon a devout and grateful testimony to God's action.

THE RELATION BETWEEN REVELATION AND FAITH

Even though we deny that God predestines some to "see" and others to be "blind," we are faced with the necessity of saying something about the relationship between revelation and faith. The question may be phrased in the following way: "Why do some respond favourably to the divine action while others are either indifferent to it or openly antagonistic to it?" Denying predestination simply eliminates one possible answer to the question. It does not provide another answer, though it bids us to seek an answer in the area of man's freedom to exercise his power of choice and decision.

There are those who would have us believe that all our decisions and choices are dominated by hereditary, environmental, sociological, and psychological factors. That these are powerful influences in the life of each man no one can deny. That they are the final determining factors which govern every decision and act is a matter which has not been proven, and we may wonder whether it has ever been demonstrated or whether it can be demonstrated. The whole idea is simply another theory of "predestination" with certain hereditary, environmental, sociological, and psychological factors collectively or individually being elevated to nearly-divine, omnipotent status. It is a "scientific determinism" playing

the role of a "religious determinism," and the fallacy involved in it is identical to that which is involved in theories of predestination. It sets up legitimate observations and evaluations as final authoritative explanations. Admittedly, scientific determinism can present a powerful case, for the recorded results of experiment and observation are vast, and their interpretation rests upon the presuppositions of science in a world conditioned to respect scientific method.

This is not intended to debunk or belittle science, though it may indeed have something to do with "de-mythologizing" it. It is intended to say that men are free to rebel against the scientifically observable (and hypothetical?) factors which influence their lives, just as they are free to rebel against God. We proceed, therefore.

Why then do some respond favourably to the divine action which constitutes the revelation? Why are others indifferent to it? Why do some become hostile to it? Perhaps the three categories of acceptance, indifference, and rejection are too rigid, but it seems to me that they conveniently represent the various reactions that occurred in the case of Jesus.

No doubt Jesus himself struggled especially with the reasons behind the refusal of those who rejected his

mission. The descriptions of them are significant. Yet the fact that those who remained aloof from him or were hostile to him are described as deaf and sightless or hard-hearted does not explain why they were that way. Matthew 23:37ff. = Luke 13:34ff. is also pertinent:

Jerusalem, Jerusalem...how often I wished to
gather together your children...and you
wished otherwise.

Men wished otherwise; they "would not." But we receive no inkling as to why they "would not."

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews states the matter in another fashion (3:16-4:3). In his analogy from the Old Testament it is because of their "unpersuasion" and "unbelief" that those who rebelled under Moses' leadership were unable to enter the "Rest of God." The main point, which is applied to those who hear the Christian Gospel, is this:

The message which they heard did not benefit them, because it did not meet with faith in the hearers (4:2).

A strongly-supported variant reading changes the sense to some extent, but either way the point seems to be the contrast between those who hear the message and do not believe and those who hear the message and do believe, as verse 3 indicates. Even so, this does not help us to understand why some respond with unfaith and others respond with faith.

The basic question behind all of this is, "How is revelation recognized as such?" That is, what constitutes revelation and by what means does it become credible, both at its primary (initial) and secondary (transmitted) levels? This question cannot be answered in a final way except in terms of either personal testimony or dogma. Dogma prohibits the asking of any questions beyond the authoritative answer which it hands down. Personal testimony may make a claim which can be neither verified nor denied on the basis of evidence. Personal testimony of this sort is completely subjective, and whether actually valid or not, its validity for others is open to question. So-called "revelation" may be only the verbalized wish-fulfilment of an unbalanced person.

Are there then no positive criteria for the judgment of revelation? One is suggested in Deuteronomy 18:21ff.

And if you say in your heart, "how may we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?"-- when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously, you need not be afraid of him.

So there is the criterion of time: wait and see what happens. This is good advice, perhaps, but what if the prophet calls for immediate decision concerning what he says? Then there is no time to wait and see. How then does one test the

revelation? The measurement of consistency and coherence with past revelation has some validity. Likewise, an evaluation of the character of the claimant may be helpful. Rigidly applied to Jesus these tests could deny that any valid revelation ever came from him. Though he would have claimed that his mission fulfilled the best of Israel's past, many would have denied that it was consistent and coherent with the past. The personal character of Jesus did not recommend him to some, as Mark 3:21ff. and Matthew 11:19 show.

We may allow that Jesus would have recognized a certain value in such tests, but his mission remained throughout an appeal for men's response in the face of God's gracious action on their behalf. He seems to have counted upon the fact that his countrymen would recognize the validity of what he proclaimed, but he gave no explanation of the basis for that recognition. No doubt the heritage of Israel in Scripture and tradition, the Roman oppression, the divisions within society and the longing (both reactionary and devout) for deliverance were influential factors in the situation. Certainly Jesus meant to imply that the power of God was operative in his "mighty works." These were evidence of God's gracious activity. Some requested more evidence (Mark 8:11f.). But Jesus seemed less concerned about the evidence upon which men based their response than about the

condition of their inward selves out of which that response came. He spoke about the things that come from within (Mark 7:20ff.; Matt. 12:35 = Luke 6:45), and while these sayings refer to the moral behavior of men, one cannot but suppose that the seat of action from which Jesus sought to elicit response to his mission was identical to that from which he said the moral behavior of men came. The inner condition of a man largely determines what he does with the evidence that comes to his senses. "Why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?" (Luke 12:57).

Beyond these things, it was "time" (kairos). How Jesus knew it was "time" we do not know. Yet it is said that he spoke with authority. To borrow and re-apply Amos Wilder's metaphor, there was tinder ready to be ignited.⁶ In some sense it is correct to say that Jesus both struck the kindling spark and was himself the kindling spark, but we do not know his reasoning (if it may be called reasoning) in the matter.

The net effect of this discussion is to say that we do not know the precise relationship between revelation and faith. We have some knowledge of factors which influence responses of various kinds. With caution we may apply certain tests of validity to the claim of revelation.

⁶Amos N. Wilder, New Testament Faith for Today, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1955), p. 80.

There is no "formula" which guarantees a cause and effect procedure. The existence of such a formula would in fact ensure that a type of predestination governs the relationship. Yet the failure to find a formula cannot be used as evidence that men are totally free in the matter, since it both begs the question and argues from silence. The practice of Jesus, however, does neither, and its primary emphasis was an appeal to the will of the hearers in the conviction that they could exercise the judgment necessary, "sore let and hindered" though they might be.

PREACHING THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM TODAY

We have concluded that God does not predestine some to see and others to be blind. Subsequently we have concluded that there is no formula to ensure the success of the gospel. The suggestion of the final sentence of the preceding section is that we are thrown back to the example of the practice of Jesus in seeking to communicate the Christian message. We may expect that those who hear the Gospel today will apply to its claims the tests of consistency and coherence. We may expect them to inquire about the character of the Church and Christians. We may find influences in the heritage and culture of the hearers that will both help and hinder their responses. The question of relevance will also be raised.

Yet, while it is necessary to be aware of these things, they are not matters with which the Church should become pre-occupied. Pre-occupation with them has led to the obscuring of the message itself, for it has resulted mainly in explanation rather than in demonstration. This is not meant to minimize the importance of verbal communication. It is to say that attempts to explain the Gospel are also subtle if unintentional attempts to comprehend the fullness of the divine action within the confines of language. The tendency is to become satisfied with the explanation and the need for explanation, rather than to be concerned with demonstration and the need for demonstration.

To clarify our meaning, let us look at Jesus. In words he announced the divine action. In action he demonstrated it. His "demonstrating" served two ends: outreach and assurance. He proclaimed that God was giving "kingship" to the unworthy and undeserving and he himself associated with such. He demonstrated the outreach of God. Furthermore, the company of his followers was a "fellowship of assurance." In this circle of those who had responded to him he spoke of and acted out the assurance that they were participants in the divine purpose.

The matter of the relationship of forgiveness and repentance illustrates the total picture. Earlier we argued

that the Good News of the Kingdom means that God's forgiveness precedes man's repentance and may be regarded as the "cause" of it. Man's repentance is not the condition of God's forgiveness; it is the result of God's forgiveness. We said then that the church soon became unconcerned about preserving the radically unique teaching of its Lord about the relationship of forgiveness and repentance. In doing so, it allowed that relationship to become reversed. I submit that this reversal is preserved and exhibited in the life of the Church today, both in its words and actions. As a result the church is handicapped by an internal conflict within its own message. It proclaims a message of divine grace, but maintains an attitude about forgiveness and repentance which is out of harmony with the divine grace.

As evidence I present the statements of two competent and reputable New Testament scholars. These statements exhibit both the obscuring of the message and the handicap of the internal conflict. T. W. Manson has written:

Forgiveness is thus a free gift of God. It is, however, neither indiscriminate nor unconditional. In order to qualify for it at all the sinner must realize that he is a sinner. The debtor must realize that he is hopelessly insolvent...⁷

In his volume on Forgiveness and Reconciliation Vincent Taylor says that the conditions of forgiveness in the teaching of

⁷Manson, Teaching of Jesus, pp. 310-311.

Jesus are repentance and the presence of the forgiving spirit.⁸ Later he makes the following statement:

The remission of sins, it is recognized, depends upon repentance. Always an act of sheer grace, God's forgiveness is not largess bestowed indiscriminately. God cannot forgive the feebly penitent, or those who are not penitent at all, because so to act would be to act contrary to his nature as the God of righteousness and truth. Forgiveness of this kind would be the removal of great barriers which man has barely seen, or has not even descried. It is only when a man cries: "God be merciful to me a sinner!" that God can, consistently with his love, remit sins.⁹

Both Manson and Taylor are concerned lest the divine forgiveness get out of control! Though they maintain that forgiveness is a "free gift" and "an act of sheer grace," they also insist that God discriminates when he uses it. No doubt (as Taylor's statement implies) their intention is to protect and preserve the reputation of God. This is the whole issue in a nutshell. Their explanations have obscured the point of the Gospel; namely, that God has sacrificed his reputation for the sake of men because he loves them. God does not intend that men should "qualify for" his forgiveness (even if they could). God's forgiveness is "largess bestowed indiscriminately!" He has removed great barriers which men

⁸Vincent Taylor, Forgiveness and Reconciliation, (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1941), p. 18.

⁹Ibid., p. 234.

have barely seen, even those which men do not know to exist. Humanly speaking, he has acted contrary to his nature as the God of righteousness and truth. This is what "forgiveness" means.

If what Manson and Taylor say about repentance and forgiveness is true, then the Gospel is a new kind of Pharisaism. But if the Gospel is grace, as they maintain out of one side of their mouths, then what they say about the relationship of forgiveness and repentance is in error. The internal conflict of their explanations emasculates the Good News and empties their words of meaning.

How then shall we speak of the response that the Gospel invites a person to make? It is the claiming of a gift which already has been given. It is a "receiving" of the gift, not a condition upon which the giving depends. Moreover, should the gift be refused, that is, not claimed or received, it remains a proffered gift, eagerly awaiting a claimant.

In the preceding paragraphs two New Testament scholars have borne the brunt of an indictment which should include a large segment of the theology and practice of the Church in the twentieth century. Indeed, our argument has been that the reversal of Jesus' teaching about forgiveness and repentance began in the Early Church before the tradition

of his teaching left Palestinian soil. This, it will be recalled, is to be seen from the Targum phrase in Mark 4:12. Therefore, it may be said also that a large segment of nearly twenty centuries of the church falls under the indictment.

The primary implication of this discussion is to urge a critical re-examination of the Church's message and a demonstration of that message in today's proclamation. The demonstration is essential to both outreach and assurance. Especially is there widespread need for the church to be "the fellowship of assurance," for those who are confident of a new relationship to God in their own lives will be most effective in demonstrating the Gospel to "outsiders."

I do not suggest that this is a formula for the success of the Church. Frankly, I think that if it is demonstrated the radicalness of the Gospel is more likely to get the Church into trouble than to make it successful. It might even lead to the crucifixion of the Church. In the midst of the all-too-obviously present barriers between man and man, and man and God, in September 1960 as this is being written, nothing is needed more than an ultimate obedience which is an atoning demonstration of God's good will.

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