

# **The Authenticity of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares and Its Interpretation**

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*The Authenticity of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares and Its Interpretation*

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## **Abstract**

This thesis seeks to demonstrate the authenticity (as dominical teaching) of the parable of the darnel (Mt 13:24-30) and its interpretation (Mt 13:36-43). The interpretation in particular is almost universally regarded as non-dominical, notably by J Jeremias and his followers. My thesis argues that the whole of Mt 13:36-43 (and Mt 13:24-30) should be seen as dominical.

The 'introduction' gives a brief survey of parabolic studies, and outlines the case against the authenticity of Mt 13:24-30,36-43. Chapter AI defends the authenticity of the parable (Mt 13:24-30). The following chapters do the same for the interpretation (Mt 13:36-43), looking at the 'Son of Man' and related teaching (chapter BI), the 'kingdom of God' (BII), 'righteousness' and 'lawlessness' (BIII), and other motifs (BIV), and finally the question of the coherence of the parable and its interpretation (BV). My approach has been negatively to demonstrate the weakness of the scholarly arguments against authenticity and positively to offer a case for authenticity via (a) a study of background, including special study of the rural Palestinian practices and of relevant Jewish theological ideas, and (b) a careful use of the criterion of multiple attestation which demonstrates that our material is linguistically and theologically coherent with other well-attested Jesus tradition.

The originality of the work lies apart from anything else in the fact that a full length defence of the authenticity of Mt 13:24-30,36-43 has not been attempted before. But we have also brought to bear various insights, canvassed in other contexts, but not specifically in connexion with Mt 13:24-30,36-43, e.g. suggesting a background to the Son of Man tradition in Ezekiel and the Similitudes of Enoch, making use of the Old Testament concept of God as farmer, explaining the agricultural background to the parable and interpretation.

## **Acknowledgement**

This thesis would not have been a reality had it not been for the tremendous encouragement and suggestions rendered by my second supervisor, Dr R T France, the Principal of Wycliffe Hall and Dr G McConville, the Course Director for MPhil/PhD. Through countless corrections and patient coaching, my first supervisor, Dr D Wenham, helped this thesis attain its present form. My wife Shanti took on extra chores that I may devote maximum time to research. To all four, sincere gratitude is due. Finally, I would also like to express my heart-felt thanks to the sponsors in UK and abroad for faithfully contributing towards the scholarship and to the administration at Wycliffe Hall for their generous subsidy and the scholastic atmosphere.

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## **Recommendation**

The parable of the wheat and the tares is subjected to detailed analysis in order to ascertain whether they are authentic words of Jesus. In the course of the study, assumptions we make about the authenticity of gospel material and criteria for redactional activity are questioned. This study by Ramesh Khattry offers a distinctive contribution to the interoperation of the gospel.

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This thesis represents a great achievement by a remarkable man. Ramesh Khattry is the first Nepali Christian to achieve a doctorate in biblical studies and (as far as I know) the first scholar anywhere to publish a full-length study of the parable of the wheat and the tares. In the thesis he mounts a significant challenge to widely held scholarly opinions; bringing together a range of arguments- agricultural, historical and theological- he shows that both the parable and its interpretation make excellent sense as teaching given by Jesus in his first-century Palestinian context. I am glad to be associated with this work.

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# Abbreviations

## I. Reference Books and Journals

BJRL	-	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
CBQ	-	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
ET	-	<i>Expository Times</i>
JBL	-	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JR	-	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JSNT	-	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JTS	-	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
NovT	-	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NTS	-	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
SJT	-	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
TB	-	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
TDNT	-	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
ZAW	-	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

## II. General

Heb	-	Hebrew
L	-	Material peculiar to or found only in the gospel of Luke.
LXX	-	Septuagint.
M	-	Material peculiar to or found only in the gospel of Matthew.
MT	-	Massoretic Text.
Q	-	A source used by Matthew and Luke for items not found in the gospel of Mark.



# Introduction

This thesis argues for the dominical origin of the parable of the dandelion and its interpretation. It is thus a modest contribution to the ongoing scholarly quest for the historical Jesus<sup>1</sup> which has more or less dominated western scholarship for the last two hundred years, and continues unabated. In writing this thesis, I side with those scholars who think the quest is possible, while recognising its limitations and the fact that it yields at best probable results, not certainties (cf 4.3.3).<sup>2</sup> I also side with those who consider the quest theologically important.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The most detailed survey of the works on the historical Jesus is by W S Kissinger: *The Lives of Jesus*, Garland (1985). For a study aimed at the popular level, see I H Marshall: *I Believe in the Historical Jesus*, Hodder and Stoughton (1977). Also E Fuchs: *Studies of the Historical Jesus*, tr Scobie, SCM (1964) and G Ebeling: 'The Significance of the Critical Historical Method for Church and Theology in Protestantism', 17-61, and 'The Question of the Historical Jesus and the Problem of Christology', 288-304, both in *Word and Faith*, tr Leitch, SCM (1984).

<sup>2</sup>Doubts about the possibility of the quest have been expressed by great names in the past such as A Schweitzer: *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, tr Montgomery and Burkitt, Black (1910) 401, and R Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, tr Marsh, Blackwell (1963) 1-6, 101, 105, 205; *Theology of the New Testament*, I, tr Grobel, SCM (1952) 3ff; and *Jesus and the Word*, Scribner's (1958) 6, 8. In *I Believe in the Historical Jesus*, Hodder and Stoughton (1977) 126, I H Marshall says,

If A. Schweitzer had pronounced the obituary on the quest for the historical Jesus, Bultmann could be said to have laid its tombstone in place.

Such doubts have continued into the present with, for example, J Drury. Commenting specifically on parables, (*The Parables in the Gospels*, SPCK, 1985, 3), he says

The critic who is after the authentic and original parables of Jesus is like a restorer trying to clean an allegedly over-painted canvas by Rubens without having access to a single indisputably authentic Rubens painting or even sketch. The attempts continue because religious hopes die hard.

Despite such doubts, the quest has never been given up by the scholarly community, and indeed has been vigorously pursued and defended by recent scholars such as G Vermes: *Jesus the Jew*, Collins (1973); E P Sanders: *Jesus and Judaism*, SCM (1985); M Borg: *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teaching of Jesus*, Edwin Mellen (1984); B F Meyer: *The Aims of Jesus*, SCM (1979), A E Harvey: *Jesus and the Constraints of History*, Duckworth (1982), and J H Charlesworth: *Jesus within Judaism*, SPCK (1988).

<sup>3</sup>The quest of the historical Jesus has not been a priority of the two-thirds world theologians. Indeed, two-thirds world scholars have often quite rightly criticized western theology for being pre-occupied with historical matters at the expense of other hermeneutical issues. Liberation theologians have rightly argued that the historical-critical method cannot and does not adequately address the hermeneutical problems of the impoverished and, in many cases, oppressed two-thirds world. However, a theological study (such as this thesis) still has value for a Biblical student from a non-western context. (a) Not all of western scholastic labour is fruitless. The universal nature of the Church encourages the discerning use of what is best in western scholarship. (b) The issue of the authenticity of the teaching ascribed to Jesus in the gospels may be seen as a purely academic matter by some scholars in the west; it is seen as of vital importance to the young churches of the two-thirds world. Most there would agree with the pertinent remark of S Neill, (cf S Neill and T Wright: *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1986*, OUP, 1988, 237) the late scholar and a veteran missionary to India, that

the faith of the Church stands or falls with the general reliability of the historical evidence for the life and death of Jesus Christ.

Parables have had a 'place of honour' in attempts at reconstructing the outlines of Jesus' life and teaching, as noted by E P Sanders<sup>4</sup> in his recent work on Jesus' history. The German scholar J Jeremias,<sup>5</sup> speaks for many when he describes the parables as 'a fragment of the original rock of tradition'. There have been scholars (cf those listed in 1.1 and J Drury fn 2) who have been sceptical about attempts to recover historical bedrock in the parables. But it may be significant that in the present North American context, the

firstfruits of the Jesus Seminar have appeared, color-coding each portion of the parables of the canonical Gospels and Thomas red, pink, gray, or black in descending order of probability of authenticity.<sup>6</sup>

Parables are where the seminar has chosen to start its published work; the issue of authenticity in parabolic studies is with us to stay.

The parable of the darnel and its interpretation are an interesting test-case,<sup>7</sup> since they would widely be regarded as having a particularly low claim to authenticity (cf 3).

## 1 Parabolic Studies after Jülicher and the Question of Authenticity

Before examining the parable of the darnel in particular, a brief survey of earlier parabolic studies with a special reference to the question of authenticity is in order. No attempt will be made here to duplicate the work of other scholars who have described the history of parable interpretation before A Jülicher.<sup>8</sup> It suffices to state that parabolic study before the time of Jülicher generally suffered from unbridled allegorical interpretation which the 'father of modern parabolic studies' checked. A detailed survey of the work of Jülicher and others after him is also not possible within the scope of our thesis,<sup>9</sup> but we will highlight those features of modern study which will prove relevant to our discussion of Mt 13:24-30,36-43.

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One cannot help asking if Neill has been proven correct by the continuing decline in church membership in the west and whether the past (and present) scholarly scepticism about Jesus is partly to blame.

<sup>4</sup> op.cit. 7,18,25 in the 'Introduction' and p 442 for references to Sander's own use of the parables in his study.

<sup>5</sup> *The Parables of Jesus*, tr S H Hooke, SCM (1983) 11-12.

<sup>6</sup> C L Blomberg in 'Interpreting the Parables of Jesus,' *CBQ* 53 (1991) 50, referring to *The Parables of Jesus: Red Letter Edition*, Polebridge (1988) by R W Funk, B B Scott, and J R Butts.

<sup>7</sup>For a two-thirds world student, the parable is especially interesting because of its agricultural imagery.

<sup>8</sup>For the most detailed survey of early and patristic parabolic interpretation see W S Kissinger: *The Parables of Jesus*, Scarecrow (1979). G V Jones's work *The Art and Truth of the Parables*, SPCK (1964) 1-16, describes contributions of scholars not generally known and belonging to the period before Jülicher. R H Stein's treatment in *An Introduction of the Parables of Jesus*, Westminster (1981) 42-52 is shorter.

<sup>9</sup> For surveys of the works from Jülicher till the present, see J D Kingsbury: *The Parables of Jesus in Matthew 13*, SPCK (1969) 1-11; N Perrin: *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom*, Fortress (1976) 91-107 and 'The Modern Interpretation of the Parables of Jesus and the Problem of Hermeneutics', in *Interpretation*, 25 (1971) 131-148; P R Jones: *The Teaching of the Parables*, Broadman (1982) 12-26; M Boucher: *The Mysterious Parable*, Catholic Biblical Association (1977) 3-10; K E Bailey: *Poet and Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes*, Eerdmans (1976) 15-26, J C Little: 'Parable Research in the Twentieth Century', I,II,III, *ET* 87 (1975-76) 356-60; 88 (1976-77) 40-43,71-75; G V Jones, 16-54, and Stein, 53-71.

## 1.1 Jülicher and His Successors

In attacking the excessive allegorical interpretation of parables prevalent in his day, Jülicher (in 1888)<sup>10</sup> started with the basic presumption that Jesus' parabolic teaching was simple, understood by all without the need for explanation. Relying on Greek (Aristotle's) categories of rhetoric, Jülicher set out to define the 'simile' and the 'metaphor'. Although both the figures of speech do the task of comparing, a simile sets two items side by side; a metaphor substitutes one for the other. A simile is literal and makes use of prepositions (e.g. 'like', 'as') to make the comparison. A metaphor is symbolic (e.g. 'He is a pig!') and has to be understood figuratively. A parable is an extended simile, an allegory a series of metaphors. An allegory needs decoding because it disguises the item it is comparing. The evangelists misunderstood some of Jesus' parables (e.g. the wicked tenants, Mt 21:33-45=Mk 12:1-11=Lk 20:9-18 and the wedding garment in Mt 22:1-14) for allegories.<sup>11</sup> A parable, on the other hand, is self-explanatory. It can illumine and instruct. Jesus used parables. Thus the difficult saying of Mt 13:10-17=Mk 4:10-12=Lk 8:9-10, which seems to portray parables as hard to understand, cannot be attributed to him but to the misunderstanding of his intention by the evangelists.<sup>12</sup> Jesus taught all openly and commanded his disciples to do so (Mt 10:27=Lk 12:3). The interpretations of the parables (e.g. of the sower and tares) originate not from him but the evangelists. Furthermore, Jülicher insisted that each parable was a vehicle for one idea (point) only, this being a general moral principle of the broadest application.<sup>13</sup> So for Jülicher, the main test for authenticity lay in the form of a parable.

Jülicher's proposal did not go unassailed. C A Bugge's<sup>14</sup> main criticism of his predecessor was that he should have used Jewish categories instead of Greek because the Hebrew word *māshāl* can stand for both parable and allegory. Furthermore, Bugge cited 'respectable' uses of allegory in Dan 4:12 and Ezk 17:22; 31:6. P Fiebig<sup>15</sup> did extensive work in rabbinic parables and showed that interpretations follow most of them.

The view that parables teach general moral principles was questioned in a short work published in 1892 by J Weiss.<sup>16</sup> In particular he rejected the liberal notion that certain kingdom parables of Jesus teach evolutionary 'growth'. Rather, parables, such as that of the mustard seed, make a contrast between the present and the end-time. This eschatological emphasis was to significantly influence the form critic R Bultmann<sup>17</sup> who claimed that only parables having it could be regarded as genuine. Bultmann's contribution to parable studies was (a) in categorising of parabolic material, (b) in setting out other criteria for authenticity. Form criticism was to influence also the British scholar A T Cadoux,<sup>18</sup> who

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<sup>10</sup>*Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*, I, Mohr (1910). In this later edition, pp 52-80 deal with simile, metaphor, parable, and allegory.

<sup>11</sup>ibid. 118f.

<sup>12</sup>ibid. 49.

<sup>13</sup>ibid.103f.

<sup>14</sup>*Die Haupt-Parabeln Jesu*, Ricker (1903) 35f.

<sup>15</sup>Fiebig's two major works are *Altjüdische Gleichnisse und die Gleichnisse Jesu*, Mohr (1904) and *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu im Lichte der rabbinischen Gleichnisse des neutestamentlichen Zeitalters*, Mohr (1912).

<sup>16</sup>*Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes*, II, Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht (1900) 48-49,84-85. The 1892 edition is much briefer.

<sup>17</sup>op.cit.179-222.

<sup>18</sup>*The Parables of Jesus: Their Art and Use*, Clarke (1930) 43-9.

contrary to Jülicher and the German scholarship of his time, asserted that limiting parables to one point each was arbitrary.

## 1.2 Historical, Eschatological Approaches

Further criticism of Jülicher's approach was to follow. In 1935 Dodd 'made exegetical history'<sup>19</sup> when he published his major work on parables.<sup>20</sup> He agreed with Weiss that the parables of Jesus do not teach general religious or moral truths. Rather, they have to do with the 'crisis' which Jesus's coming had brought about.<sup>21</sup> Since any parable was originally addressed to the first century audience, the identification of its original *Sitz im Leben* as opposed to the present gospel context is important. For Dodd, the key to understanding Jesus' parables was 'realised eschatology' - Jesus' advent and ministry have fulfilled the hopes of the Old Testament regarding the kingdom of God. Like Jülicher, Dodd too went for one main point in the parable and regarded allegories as inauthentic.

Dodd's admirer, Jeremias,<sup>22</sup> mostly agreed with him but went even further by proposing ten rules<sup>23</sup> which can help determine the original *Sitz im Leben* of a parable. Unlike Dodd, Jeremias worked within the framework of 'inaugurated eschatology' - the kingdom of God has been initiated at the coming of Jesus but awaits final fulfilment. For Jeremias, the parables were used by Jesus as weapons in the 'conflict' he faced in his ministry.

Dodd and Jeremias were criticized for their 'over-emphasis' on the historical. G V Jones<sup>24</sup> argued that the gospels show no evidence of Jesus' audience appreciating the 'crisis' of which Dodd spoke. Many parables deal with general themes such as moral behaviour and growth. Jones accused Jeremias of dogmatism,<sup>25</sup> for example in his assumption that Jesus could not have been the author of the 'generalising conclusions' which have universal applications. He considered Jeremias' attempt to recover the original meaning of parable to be not only difficult but also unnecessary, because as pieces of literature parables have wider meaning than those derived from their historical settings. Along with Jones, D O Via Jr<sup>26</sup> argued that the non-biographical nature of the gospels does not allow the recovery of the original context. Furthermore, the historical school (headed by Jeremias) has ignored the relevance of the parables to man in general, their beauty, and application for the present. Parables cannot be time-bound (i.e. limited only to their historical contexts) and are relevant for all ages.

P R Jones's<sup>27</sup> verdict is that as Jülicher sacrificed eschatology for ethics, Jeremias sacrificed ethics for eschatology, played down the literary character of the parables by insisting that they were told spontaneously in conflict situations, and showed inconsistency in stressing the parables as explanations of

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<sup>19</sup>A M Hunter: *Interpreting the Parables*, SCM (1969) 39.

<sup>20</sup>*The Parables of the Kingdom*, Religious Book Club (1942).

<sup>21</sup>ibid.25-26.

<sup>22</sup>op.cit.21.

<sup>23</sup>ibid.25-114, a summary on p 113.

<sup>24</sup>*The Art and Truth of the Parables*, SPCK (1964) 27-29.

<sup>25</sup>ibid. 35-36.

<sup>26</sup>*The Parables: Their Literary and Existential Dimension*, Fortress (1967) 21-24.

<sup>27</sup>*The Teaching of the Parables*, Broadman (1982) 14.

Jesus' Galilean ministry but rejecting the allegorical interpretations which no doubt belong to the same culture. So, the presence of allegories cannot be a mark of inauthenticity, either from the literary or cultural point of view.

### 1.3 Literary, Aesthetic, Existential Approaches

Recent critics of the historical-eschatological school have maintained that parables (a) are part of literature, thus (b) aesthetic objects (c) having existential application. Emphases vary regarding 'b' and 'c' but literary analysis of one kind or another is a common feature in these approaches which emphasize that the parables as a form of art are relevant to man's enduring experience.<sup>28</sup> G V Jones had already argued that the parable as part of literature cannot be limited to only one point applicable to one setting.<sup>29</sup> By regarding 'metaphor' as more than a propositional symbol, capable of drawing the hearer as a participant, R W Funk<sup>30</sup> asserted the same. Via<sup>31</sup> too allowed more than one point for the parable while refusing to label it allegory.

The scholar who developed the existential reading of parables was E Fuchs,<sup>32</sup> though he reacted against many of Bultmann's assertions including the view that the gospels are to be treated mainly as kerygmatic witnesses to Jesus and not as mirrors of his mind. If the gospels were only to arouse faith, Fuchs asked, why did the evangelists narrate the words and deeds of Jesus? The real meaning of Jesus must be rooted in the context of his own faith in God. In the evaluation of text, Fuchs went further than Bultmann. The latter had insisted that a language is merely a vehicle to convey an understanding of existence. Fuchs emphasised that the language does something to the hearer and has a 'performative' role. The literary nature of the gospel narratives as 'language events' makes them relevant for the present.

The credit for making Fuchs's ideas clearer and applying them to the parables goes to his pupil E Linnemann.<sup>33</sup> Linnemann sees Jesus' parables as arguments in the context of opposition, so primarily for unbelievers. Although they have been passed to us, the 'language events' of the first century have not. It is in preaching that the grace of God passes the 'language event' to the audience. Via,<sup>34</sup> aims to go further than Fuchs or Linnemann in his emphasis on a parable as an existential 'language event' that can be passed on.

In addition to these, we may cite J D Crossan, K E Bailey, M Boucher, M A Tolbert, and H-J Klauck as other 'literary analysts'. Though they all regard parables as pieces of literature, their approaches are not uniform.

Contrary to Via who finds no need to relate the parables to the historical Jesus, Crossan,<sup>35</sup> while adopting a 'structuralist' approach, does not go that far. He has also pioneered the study of clusters of

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<sup>28</sup>G V Jones, x-xi. See further N Perrin, 91-107.

<sup>29</sup>op.cit. 37.

<sup>30</sup>*Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God*, Harper and Row (1966) 149-152, also *Parables and Presence*, Fortress (1982) 124-137.

<sup>31</sup>op.cit. 16.

<sup>32</sup>*Studies of the Historical Jesus*, tr Scobie, SCM (1964), especially pp 23 and 213-228.

<sup>33</sup>*Parables of Jesus*, tr Sturdy, SPCK (1966) 23-47.

<sup>34</sup>op.cit. 52-57.

<sup>35</sup>*In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus*, Harper and Row (1973) 32-33.

parables on a common theme, e.g. the seed<sup>36</sup> and the servant<sup>37</sup> parables. Tolbert<sup>38</sup> takes the 'clustering' and 'structuralism' of Crossan further.

Bailey<sup>39</sup> subtitles his work as having a 'literary-cultural approach', but he clearly aims to do a 'historical-aesthetic' analysis which, according to him, his predecessors have not yet done.<sup>40</sup> His study neither plays down the value of history nor claims that much of it is inaccessible. Bailey's analysis of the Lukan parables has revealed a cluster of theological points for each.

Boucher and Klauck<sup>41</sup> have established by literary analysis what Bugge and Fiebig claimed long ago through their study of rabbinic parables - parables and allegories are both metaphors by genre and closely related to each other, much more than Jülicher would ever allow. Indeed, Boucher calls allegory 'an extended metaphor'; Klauck regards parables as 'rhetorical allegories'.

The work of these scholars further substantiate the fact that allegories or allegorical parables per se cannot be considered inauthentic.

## 1.4 Redactional and Midrashic Approaches

Gospel studies have been dominated in recent years by redactional critical approaches. So far as parables are concerned, J D Kingsbury's<sup>42</sup> book on the redaction of Mt 13 is notable. He asserts that Matthew uses his parable chapter as a polemic against the Jews who are living in animosity towards his community.

Quite a few scholars have proposed that some of the parables may be explained as midrashim on passages of the Old Testament.<sup>43</sup> These proposals are relatively new, and have not yet found much support. M D Goulder<sup>44</sup> is one who has devoted a major work to this approach. His basic proposal is that as the Chronicler did a 'midrashic expansion' of 1 and 2 Kings, so Matthew with Mark; and Luke with Mark/Matthew. Goulder does not see a need for the 'Q' hypothesis.<sup>45</sup> In this respect, J Drury's<sup>46</sup> position is very similar to that of Goulder. In Drury's scheme, the parables and allegories of the gospels are

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<sup>36</sup> 'The Seed Parables of Jesus', *JBL* (1973) 244-266.

<sup>37</sup> 'The Servant Parables of Jesus', *Semeia* 1 (1974) 17-62.

<sup>38</sup> *Perspectives on the Parables: An Approach to Multiple Interpretations*, Fortress (1979).

<sup>39</sup> *op.cit.*

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.* 24.

<sup>41</sup> Boucher, 21ff. H-J Klauck: *Allegorie und Allegorese in synoptischen Gleichnistexten*, Münster (1978) 111f.

<sup>42</sup> *op.cit.* Another significant redactional study is that by C E Carlston: *The Parables of the Triple Tradition*, Fortress (1975), but he deals with only the Markan parables that have parallels in Matthew or Luke.

<sup>43</sup> E.g. J M Ford: 'The Parable of the Foolish Scholars', *NovT* 9 (1967) 107-123; J Sanders: 'The Ethic of Election in Luke's Great Banquet Parable', in *Essays in Old Testament Ethics*, eds Crenshaw and Willis, KTAV (1974); J D M Derrett: *Law in the New Testament*, Darton, Longman, and Todd (1970) 208-227 and 'Law in the New Testament: The Parable of the Unjust Judge', *NTS* 18 (1971-2) 178-191.

<sup>44</sup> *Midrash and Lection in Matthew*, SPCK (1974) 3-69.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.* 8-9.

<sup>46</sup> *op.cit.*

modelled on those of the Old Testament, and have been redacted to serve as vehicles for the theology of each of the evangelists.

By their very nature, the redactional and midrashic approaches tend to assign the gospels (especially, Matthew and Luke) and the parables to the creativity of the evangelists. The question of authenticity is often treated irrelevant and/or unanswerable.

Space permits only a mention of some other ways the parables have been studied: e.g. the 'new hermeneutic', 'structuralism', 'deconstruction', and 'reader-response criticism'.<sup>47</sup> There has been an attempt to view Jesus' parables as similar to, if not the same as, rabbinic parables, something Bultmann hinted at long ago.<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, Professor C Westermann<sup>49</sup> has made a thorough study of comparisons and metaphors in the Old Testament; and shown the indebtedness of the gospel parables to the former. He argues that metaphors, and thus parables, are not mere illustrations or images but 'happenings', 'events'. His insight has yet to be applied in detail to the parables of Jesus.

Although our survey has been selective and impressionistic, it gives an overview of the struggles of our predecessors in trying to understand the parables and an idea of immensity of the task. The parable of the dandelion and its explanation have caused their share of difficulty (see the introduction in W S Kissing's<sup>50</sup> monumental work which gives snippets of how the parable was interpreted from the time of Irenaeus onwards). However, our survey is sufficient to illustrate the lack of uniformity of opinion regarding the criteria for the authenticity of parables or parabolic studies in general.<sup>51</sup>

## 2 A Response

Given the survey above, we have to establish our own position on certain issues in order to make possible a meaningful study of the parable of the dandelion and its interpretation. Our response will be limited to matters relevant to Mt 13:24-30,36-43.

### 2.1 Context to Decide Complex or Multiple Points

Jülicher's 'one parable one point' dogmatism cannot be rigidly held any more. The possibility of a parable having more than one point should be allowed. However, this does not mean that an unbridled number of points can be derived from parables by appeal to speculative contexts or farfetched clustering. This seems to us a danger in those who abandon historical approaches and speak of the 'polyvalency' of parables. We continue to uphold historical study. For us, this will involve a thorough investigation of the

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<sup>47</sup>C L Blomberg in *Interpreting the Parables*, IVP (1990) 134-163; Little: III. See E P Sanders and M Davies: *Studying the Synoptic Gospels*, SCM (1989) 224-251, with regard to gospel studies in general.

<sup>48</sup>E.g. D Flusser: *Die rabbinischen Gleichnisse und der Gleichniserzähler Jesu*, I, Lang (1981); and his student B H Young: *Jesus and His Jewish Parables*, Paulist (1989). Bultmann, *History*, 202-205, had proposed the idea by showing Jewish parallels to the parables of Jesus. Also J G Gager: 'The Gospels and Jesus,' *JR* 54 (1974) 267.

<sup>49</sup>*The Parables of Jesus in the Light of the Old Testament*, Clark (1990).

<sup>50</sup>op.cit. 3, in connection with Irenaeus; 14, Origen; 21, Augustine; 30, Chrysostom; 42, Aquinas; 50, Calvin; and 57, Maldonatus.

<sup>51</sup>While Jeremias and followers still adhere to the 'one-point' view, scholars willing to accede more than one point to parables and authenticity to allegories are on the increase: Blomberg, 49-58, 171-251, argues that most of the parables have three points; M Black: 'The Parables as Allegory,' *BJRL* 42 (1960) 275, 287; R E Brown: 'Parable and Allegory Reconsidered,' *NovT* 5 (1962) 37-38; J W Sider: 'Proportional Analogy in the Gospel Parables,' *NTS* 31 (1985) 21-23; and D Wenham: *The Parables of Jesus*, Hodder and Stoughton (1989) 227-229.

relevant background with special emphasis on the Old Testament. We must at least explore the idea that our parable (Mt 13:24-30,36-43) mirrors Jesus' thinking in response to the situation he faced in his ministry. The aesthetic school rightly emphasizes that a parable can have wider relevance than supposed by the historical situation. However, only after a parable is understood in its own context can its real meaning be interpreted for 'all ages'.

## 2.2 Treatment of Parable and Allegory as from the Same Genre

Learning from Jülicher's mistakes, scholars have rightly emphasized Jewish literary categories for understanding the genre of the parable. However, some (e.g. Jeremias and followers) continue to uphold the distinction between the 'genuine' parable and the 'secondary' allegory. Since we agree with those scholars who argue that the Jewish *māshāl* does not allow such a dichotomy, in our investigation mere form (of parable or allegory) will no longer be a criterion for authenticity.

## 2.3 A Synthetic Approach

Finally, we shall steer away from polarising ethics and eschatology or growth and crisis. During the course of our study, it will become clear that Mt 13:24-30,36-43 allows for a harmonious existence of these alleged 'opposites'. A better understanding is possible only through an approach which takes into account the normally 'reconciling' mind of the oriental.

This brief response prepares us for the problems raised by the parable of the darnel and its interpretation.

## 3 The Nature of the Problem in Mt 13:24-30, 36-43

The question of the authenticity of the parable of the wheat and the tares (Mt 13:24-30) and of its explanation (vs 36-43) has received widely divergent answers from different scholars. Some argue for the dominical origin of both parable and interpretation; some deny the dominical origin of both; some accede partial authenticity to the relevant traditions. In addressing the question, we cannot assume that the parable and its interpretation are an unity, because there is disagreement even on that. So it will be necessary for us to deal with each separately.

Jülicher himself cast doubts on the authenticity<sup>52</sup> of the parable of the darnel (Mt 13:24-30). His diagnosis had to do with the literary form of the passage. He labelled it 'allegory', which, according to him, Jesus did not use. Noting the 'artificial' treatment of the 'servants' and the 'enemy', Dibelius<sup>53</sup> considered it an allegory slanted for didactic purposes. Many have followed this line of thought.<sup>54</sup> There are equally as many<sup>55</sup> who have taken a less radical view and found the parable partially authentic. They

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<sup>52</sup>op.cit. 551,557,559. According to France, 'The Authenticity of the Sayings of Jesus' in *History, Criticism, and Faith*, ed Brown, IVP (1976), footnote on pp 101-102, the term 'authentic' can mean (a) authoritative, (b) credible, and (c) genuine - actually said by Jesus. In this study, (c) is applicable.

<sup>53</sup>*From Tradition to Gospel*, tr Woolf, Nicholson and Watson (1934) 253-54.

<sup>54</sup>T W Manson: *The Sayings of Jesus*, SCM (1961) 193 and Goulder, 367-8.

<sup>55</sup>D R Catchpole: 'John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Parable of the Tares,' *SJT*, 31 (1978) 569-570; H Weder: *Die Gleichnisse Jesu als Metaphern*, Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht (1978) 120f; H Hendrickx: *The Parables of Jesus*, Geoffrey Chapman (1986) 57-58; Kingsbury, 65f; E Schweizer: *The Good News According to Matthew*, tr Green, SPCK (1976) 303. The authentic verses for different authors are: Catchpole - 24b,26b,30b; Weder - 24b,26,30b; Hendrickx - 24b,26,30b; Kingsbury - 24b-26; and Schweizer - 24b,26,28b, 29,30a(?).

are not however unanimous in the sections they pick as being genuine. This suggests that all of Mt 13:24-30 might be regarded as dominical. There are advocates of this view as well.<sup>56</sup> Dodd<sup>57</sup> considers the parable authentic, and also sees it as supporting his theme of realised eschatology.

There are many more scholars who object to the authenticity of the interpretation (Mt 13:36-43). Jülicher<sup>58</sup> regarded it as an explanation of the 'allegory' in Mt 13:24-30, both Mt 13:24-30 and vs 36-43 being Matthew's creations. Dodd<sup>59</sup> advises that we would 'do well to forget this interpretation as completely as possible'. Manson<sup>60</sup> suspected it because of its exact correspondence with Mt 13:24-30. However, the most thorough criticism came from Jeremias.<sup>61</sup> His arguments against the authenticity of Mt 13:36-43 can be summarized under two headings: linguistic and interpretive. Under the linguistic heading, Jeremias adduced thirty-seven examples of supposedly Matthean terms and other 'Christian' expressions which according to him could not have come from Jesus' *Sitz im Leben*. For the latter, following Bultmann<sup>62</sup> he argued that the main point of the parable (Mt 13:24-30) is passed over by the interpretation (vs 36-43).

Jeremias did not go unchallenged. In an important article, the French Catholic scholar M de Goedt<sup>63</sup> reduced Jeremias's list from thirty-seven to six, thus seriously undermining the latter's linguistic argument. De Goedt argued that the interpretation of the darnel consists of some dominical material. Roughly three years later, Jeremias's<sup>64</sup> reply was published. However, this consisted mainly of a repeat of the old arguments though in greater detail. De Goedt has had some followers<sup>65</sup> who also argue that Mt 13:36-43 is partially authentic.

Independently, J A Baird<sup>66</sup> has advocated the authenticity of the interpretation by showing logical and methodological fallacies in Jeremias's arguments. Baird argues that (a) the occurrence of some favourite words of the evangelist in Mt 13:36-43 can say nothing about the passage as a word of Jesus, (b) a hapax legomenon in it cannot be readily concluded as Matthean, and (c) the possibility that Jesus coined

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<sup>56</sup>Jeremias, 224-5; A H McNeile: *The Gospel according to St Matthew*, Macmillan (1955) 202; D Hill: *The Gospel of Matthew*, Eerdmans (1987) 231.

<sup>57</sup>op.cit. 185.

<sup>58</sup>op.cit. 554-5.

<sup>59</sup>op.cit.184.

<sup>60</sup>op.cit.194.

<sup>61</sup>op.cit.81-5 or in his original, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*, Göttingen (1952) 59-66.

<sup>62</sup>op.cit. 187

<sup>63</sup>'L'Explication de la Parabole de L'Ivraie (Mt. XIII, 36-43),' *Revue Biblique* (1959) 32-54.

<sup>64</sup>'Die Deutung des Gleichnisses vom Unkraut unter dem Weizen (Mt xiii:36-43)' in *Neotestamentica et Patristica*, eds Reicke and van Unnik, Brill (1962) 59-63.

<sup>65</sup>Hill, 235. Gnilka in *Das Matthäusevangelium I*, Herder (1986) 499; Bonnard, *L'Evangile selon Saint Matthieu*, Delachaux and Niestlé (1963) 204 fn 1 and p 205; Schweizer, 39.

<sup>66</sup>J A Baird: *The Justice of God in the Teaching of Jesus*, SCM (1963) 135-7; see his 'A Pragmatic Approach to Parable Exegesis', *JBL* 76 (1957) 206, for Jesus' habit of giving explanations. R E Brown, 37, says that interpretations were rejected as unauthentic mainly because of the prejudice against allegories.

new words and phrases and that these are not necessarily Matthean must be granted. Also, contrary to the normal view, he argues that in the synoptics the ratio of the parables explained to the disciples to those not explained (mainly to opponents) is 41:22. So, according to Baird, Mt 13:36-43 as an explanation is fully in line with Jesus' teaching methods.

Jeremias's objection that the main point of the interpretation differs from that of the parable has been accepted in varying modes by a few scholars.<sup>67</sup> However, there are as many who have disagreed with him. Thus D Hill<sup>68</sup> and R T France<sup>69</sup> claim that the parable and its interpretation have exactly the same point. Bringing forth slightly different arguments, Marshall<sup>70</sup> claims that the emphases of the parable (Mt 13:24-30) and its interpretation (vs 36-43) do not differ, as does a work by D Wenham.<sup>71</sup>

This brief survey shows that the inauthenticity of the parable of the darnel and its interpretation cannot be a foregone conclusion. Thus there is ample justification for a study of this kind which intends to explore the issues involved and which will conclude in favour of the dominical origin of both.

Because the case is already strong in favour of the parable of the darnel (Mt 13:24-30), arguing for its authenticity will be easier. Our aim will be to adduce further original evidence in affirming the arguments of those scholars who regard the parable as genuine.

The arguments against the inauthenticity of the interpretation (Mt 13:36-43) are more weighty. So far, only de Goedt has come up with a detailed reply to Jeremias's linguistic analysis of the passage. Our response is that de Goedt did not go far enough. This thesis aims to prove that (a) even the six words de Goedt assigns to Matthean redaction can be shown as having realistic functions in the *Sitz im Leben* of Jesus and (b) the point of the parable and the interpretation do not differ as claimed.

## 4 Criteria of Authenticity and Methodology

By methodological necessity, this thesis has to adhere to the historical-critical approach. (a) The objections against the authenticity of the parable and its interpretation have arisen using such an approach. These need addressing 'in the same coin'. (b) Although the historical-critical method of study is not infallible, it is still valuable. The advent of Jesus was a historical event. This method has the capability of taking the student closest to the times of Jesus or the evangelists.<sup>72</sup>

We have already noticed a few of the criteria leading Jülicher and others to regard some parables as unauthentic. However, the credit of anticipating the modern criteria of authenticity should go to Bultmann. Though he did not name them as such, in practice we find him using the criteria of 'dissimilarity' and 'coherence'.<sup>73</sup> His student, the American scholar, N Perrin<sup>74</sup> popularized these, added

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<sup>67</sup>E.g. F W Beare in *The Gospel according to Matthew*, Blackwell (1981) 311; Kingsbury, 93f, argues that vs 36-43 are independent of vs 24-30. Also Bonnard, 204 and Catchpole, 561.

<sup>68</sup>op.cit.

<sup>69</sup>in *Matthew*, IVP (1987) 224.

<sup>70</sup>*Eschatology and the Parables*, Tyndale (1963) 12,32.

<sup>71</sup>op.cit. 65. Also Boucher, 39.

<sup>72</sup> See Marshall: 'Historical Criticism', pp 126-138 and R P Martin: 'Approaches to New Testament Exegesis,' pp 220-251, both articles in *New Testament Interpretation*, ed Marshall, Paternoster (1977). Also Neill and Wright, 224, 237, and generally.

<sup>73</sup>For Bultmann's clearest anticipation of the criterion of dissimilarity, pp 205, 101, 105. See pp 125, 162 for his use of the principle of coherence.

the criterion of multiple attestation (much used by scholars in Britain), and later the criterion of language/environment. Other scholars have come up with their own distinctive tools, most as additions to or modifications of those cited above. Jeremias<sup>75</sup> stresses the Aramaic background and Semitism; A M Hunter,<sup>76</sup> the Palestinian background, Jesus' 'highly individual way of thinking and speaking', and the unique nature of his parables. C L Mitton, Sanders and M Davies,<sup>77</sup> and D G A Calvert<sup>78</sup> have added further criteria. Meyer<sup>79</sup> prefers the word 'indices' (instead of 'criteria') and gives seven - discontinuity, originality, personal idiom (of Jesus), resistive form, multiple attestation, multiform attestation, and Aramaic substratum.

These criteria have been used to isolate dominical sayings in an attempt to get back to the historical Jesus. All have limitations of one sort or the other. Those who use the criterion of dissimilarity presume that any saying that is Jewish or 'churchly' may have been put into Jesus' mouth. However, this rigidity does not give due consideration to the fact that Jesus may have learnt from his predecessors or the church may have emulated, preserved and transmitted his teaching. Advocates of this criterion may respond by saying that it at least gives us a minimum that assuredly has dominical origin. We shall look into this later. Here, we note that the criterion has been criticised as being liable to produce an inaccurate account of Jesus and his teaching, portraying 'Jesus as a non-Jew and as leader without followers'.<sup>80</sup> J D G Dunn<sup>81</sup> stresses that the criterion of dissimilarity can no longer play the role of the primary critical tool. France<sup>82</sup> has cogently argued that it 'has no right to pronounce any saying unauthentic'. It may indicate that a logion may have come from the church, but cannot definitely prove so.

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<sup>74</sup>See *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, SCM (1967) 39-47, also the subsequent *What is Redaction Criticism?* SPCK (1970) 70. Other proponents are E Käsemann: *Essays on New Testament Themes*, tr Montague, SCM (1964) 37-45; R H Fuller: *The Foundations of New Testament Christology*, Lutterworth (1965) 18 and *A Critical Introduction to the New Testament*, Duckworth (1966) 96.

<sup>75</sup>*New Testament Theology*, I, tr Bowden, SCM (1971) 8, 14.

<sup>76</sup>*The Parables Then and Now*, SCM (1971) 14,15.

<sup>77</sup>C L Mitton: *Jesus: the Fact Behind the Faith*, Mowbray (1975) 83; E P Sanders and M Davies: *Studying the Synoptic Gospels*, SCM (1989) 304, 330.

<sup>78</sup>'An Examination of the Criteria for Distinguishing the Authentic Words of Jesus', *NTS*, 18 (1972) 211.

<sup>79</sup>op.cit. 87.

<sup>80</sup>Charlesworth:167. Also R T France: *Jesus and the Old Testament*, Baker Book House (1982) 22 and 'Authenticity', 110-117.

<sup>81</sup>J D G Dunn: 'Prophetic "I" Sayings and the Jesus Tradition,' *NTS*, 24 (1978) 198; M D Hooker: 'On Using the Wrong Tool', *Theology* 75 (1972) 570-581 and 'Christology and Methodology', *NTS* 17 (1970/71) 480-7; Calvert, 211-212; Gager, 256-259; Mitton, 84-5; F G Downing: *The Church and Jesus*, SCM (1968) 111-116; R H Stein: 'The "Criteria" for Authenticity' in *Gospel Perspective*, I, eds France and Wenham, *JSOT* (1983) 240-5; D R Catchpole: 'Tradition History,' in *New Testament Interpretation*, ed Marshall, Paternoster (1977) 174-178; R S Barbour: *Traditio-Historical Criticism of the Gospels*, SPCK (1972)5-25. For more a sympathetic evaluation of it, see D L Mealand: 'The Dissimilarity Test,' *SJT* 31 (1978) 41-50; and, Sanders and Davies, 316.

<sup>82</sup>France: 'Authenticity', 111.

The criterion of coherence used in the order dictated by Perrin, after the criterion of dissimilarity, can only compound the error of the latter.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, it would eliminate Jesus's paradoxical teachings. H K McArthur<sup>84</sup> has suggested that Perrin's order be reversed: use the criterion of multiple attestation first, coherence second, and dissimilarity third. He casts doubts on the authenticity of sayings in two or less sources. This is not satisfying<sup>85</sup> because multiple attestation cannot be used negatively - even a tradition occurring in only one source should not be regarded as inauthentic.<sup>86</sup>

Multiple attestation can mean different things. It may imply material occurring in more than one gospel, source, form-critical genre (e.g. parable and discourse), or in the gospels and other Christian literature.<sup>87</sup> Used positively, it means that a word, phrase, or concept occurring in different sources can, with some precautions, be considered genuine. Such usage can be relied upon.<sup>88</sup>

Jeremias's reliance on the presence of Aramaisms and Semitisms as a criterion<sup>89</sup> for authenticity has not found much support. The main argument is that such features could have come from the early church which no doubt existed in a Jewish/Aramaic milieu. However, although it may be risky to use purely linguistic arguments, there is no doubt that a serious investigation of the Palestinian background is extremely important. Recent studies have adequately made it clear that Jesus is to be best understood as a Jew and in relationship to Jewish culture and milieu. For, most

specialists in Jesus research would agree that Jesus' ideas were shaped by and composed of ideas inherited from ancient Israelite traditions and early Jewish theologies, and composed in a distinct fashion.<sup>90</sup>

This makes the study of the background most important.

However, we admit the methodological problem that both Jesus and the church could have derived a particular teaching from their common background. Thus we intend to separate dominical material from the redactional by comparing the teaching in Mt 13:24-30, 36-43 with Jesus' authentic teaching elsewhere in the gospels, this being isolated by the 'positive' use of multiple attestation. We shall proceed as follows:

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<sup>83</sup>Hooker, 'Using', 57 and 'Christology', 481-4. Also Gager, 259-260; Downing, 117-122; Stein, 250-1; Catchpole, 176; and Barbour, 26 .

<sup>84</sup>'The Burden of Proof in Historical Jesus Research,' *ET*, 82 (1971) 118 and 'Basic Issues - a Survey of Recent Gospel Research', *Interpretation* 18 (1964) 38-55. .

<sup>85</sup>France, 115.

<sup>86</sup>C F D Moule: *The Phenomenon of the New Testament*, SCM (1967) 71; F C Burkitt: *The Gospel History and Its Transmission*, Clark (1907) 167-168; Meyer, 87; France, 114; and Hooker: 'Christology', 486.

<sup>87</sup>Sanders and Davies, 323.

<sup>88</sup> Sanders and Davies, *ibid.*; Stein, 232; T W Manson: *The Teaching of Jesus*, CUP (1959) 10-11; McArthur, *op.cit.*; Calvert, 219; McArthur, 119; Dodd, 24; Perrin, 45.

<sup>89</sup>Sanders and Davies, 333-4; Sanders: *The Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition*, CUP (1969) 190-255. Also Hooker, 579; Gager, 261; Calvert, 216-7; and Stein, 233-236. In all fairness to Jeremias, it must be stated that he does not consider the linguistic test alone an effective criterion, *Theology*, I, 37.

<sup>90</sup>Charlesworth, 6. See also Sanders: *Jesus*; Vermes: *Jesus*; Collins (1973) generally.

## 4.1 General Method, Modified Multiple Attestation

Adhering to the historical-critical method, we shall apply the criterion of multiple attestation, but with a few precautions. (a) If we assume Markan priority<sup>91</sup> as a working hypothesis, a tradition in Mt=Mk=Lk cannot be seen as a case of multiple attestation. It is possible Matthew and Luke have simply taken it over from Mark. In such cases, we shall seek further affirmation from 'Q', 'M' or 'L' material. (b) Even if a tradition is found in Mk, Q, L, and M, that could mean no more than the proof that it was embedded deeply in early church life!<sup>92</sup> Thus the criterion of multiple attestation alone cannot prove authenticity. This will be supplemented by other types of arguments for dominical origin.

## 4.2 Method for the Parable

For the parable of the darnel (Mt 13:24-30), (a) we shall point out the shortcomings of arguments (mainly based on linguistic studies) against its authenticity. (b) Then, showing the realism of the parable in its claimed Palestinian setting, we shall argue that it could have originated as dominical teaching.

## 4.3 Method for the Interpretation

The arguments to be brought in support of the originality of the interpretation (Mt 13:36-43) are more complex.

### 4.3.1 Linguistically

Our main aim will be to tackle the thirty-seven Mattheanisms and other 'Christian' expressions alleged by Jeremias. Furthermore, we will attempt to prove that even the six words de Goedts regards as Matthean rather than dominical can be plausibly traced back to Jesus. To show this, we will demonstrate the frequent usage of the relevant Greek terms (or their equivalents) in other Jewish literature, mainly the LXX, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Scrolls, Josephus, and Philo. This in itself cannot decisively prove that Jesus used the terms in question, and has to be supplemented further.

### 4.3.2 Thematically

Since the words in question come in didactic contexts, the themes found in Mt 13:36-43 will be studied under the headings of the 'Son of Man', the 'kingdom', and the 'righteousness' teachings of Jesus. These will be compared with teachings generally attributed to him elsewhere in the gospels. Motifs in vs 36-43 which tally with dominical teaching can be regarded as genuine. In reality, we will be using our own modified version of the criterion of coherence: not after the criterion of dissimilarity (as per Perrin's order), but after the use of multiple attestation. Our discussion above makes such an approach quite legitimate.

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<sup>91</sup>In spite of the arguments brought against the two-source theory, it still seems the best working hypothesis, see the detailed discussion and bibliography in W D Davies and D C Allison: *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, I, Clark (1988) 97-127. This is also the conclusion of Stein in his work *The Synoptic Problem - An Introduction*, IVP (1988) 129-138.

<sup>92</sup>Stein: 'Criteria', 231. Also Catchpole, 176.

### 4.3.3 According to the Palestinian Background

A detailed study will be made of the background to the major motifs, represented by the headings cited in 4.3.2, found in the interpretation (Mt 13:36-43). Although Jesus was not always bound by the behaviour or thoughts of his predecessors, he was a Jew and his actions were generally in agreement with Jewish milieu. Thus Palestinian traits in the passage can be taken as likely indicators of authenticity. Where motifs in vs 36-43 are more Jewish than Hellenistic, taken cumulatively with the results of 4.3.1 and 4.3.2, they will be considered dominical.

It can, of course, be argued that the tests we have outlined cannot eliminate teachings of Jewish or churchly origin from those we regard as dominical. We could here choose to take either of two options: (a) revert to the criterion of dissimilarity and be satisfied with the 'critically assured minimum',<sup>93</sup> (b) or continue with the risk that some of the material we glean as dominical may have come from the church or Judaism. We prefer to take the latter course for the following reasons:

Firstly, although the criterion of dissimilarity may give us the 'critically assured minimum', that may not be Jesus' characteristic teaching. What he taught must have overlapped with those of his Jewish predecessors and must have been eagerly taken over by the church he founded. The fact that applying the traditional criterion consistently can lead to unsatisfactory results or even despair has been well recognised.<sup>94</sup> Secondly, most scholars<sup>95</sup> admit that we do not know enough of either Jewish customs or the life of the early church to use the criterion of dissimilarity effectively. In such a situation, it is better to err on the side of caution. Finally, we may admit, together with others<sup>96</sup> that absolute historical certainty is impossible. However, most would accept that 'it is possible to know the basic facts of Jesus' career'.<sup>97</sup> The criteria we have set above are sufficient enough to isolate the 'basic facts' of Jesus' teaching. If the parable of the dandelion (Mt 13:24-30) and its interpretation (vs 36-43) correspond with those, it is 'highly probable'<sup>98</sup> that they are authentic.

## 5 Structure of This Thesis

Since more effort will be needed for proving the dominical origin of the interpretation than the parable, our thesis will consist of two unequal parts. Section A will have only one chapter and will be devoted to the authenticity of the parable (Mt 13:24-30). Section B will deal with the interpretation (Mt 13:36-43). Because Jeremias's linguistic analysis of Mt 13:36-43 has enjoyed some popularity and entails

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<sup>93</sup>N H Dahl: 'The Problem of the Historical Jesus' in *Kerygma and History*, Abingdon (1962) 156; Mealand, 47; Stein, 244; Gager, 259; Downing, 112; and Perrin, 43.

<sup>94</sup>Perrin himself was not very optimistic of the results of the criterion, p 43, 'it will exclude all teaching in which Jesus may have been at one with Judaism or the early Church at one with him.' See also France, 111; Catchpole, 175-6, suggests a modification - its use as a 'starting-point' in the relationship with Judaism, but in 'evolutionary continuity' with the church. However, then, the criterion ceases to be what it was!

<sup>95</sup>See Gager, op.cit.; Calvert, 212; Hooker, 575; Barbour, 7. Catchpole, 177, and Mealand, 45, on the other hand, argue that we do have enough knowledge to work from the 'somewhat better known to the rather more obscure'.

<sup>96</sup>On the impossibility of attaining absolute certainty, see Mealand, op.cit.; Sanders and Davies, 312; Sanders: Jesus, 321-7; Hooker, 581.

<sup>97</sup>Sanders and Davies, 342.

<sup>98</sup>ibid. 312.

a long list of alleged Matthean vocabulary and 'Christian' expressions, it is necessary that we employ four chapters to counter it. The fifth chapter will deal with the objection that the points of the parable and its interpretation differ. Most chapters will have substantial studies of the relevant background material which will enable us to cull positive arguments of our own. Finally, in a 'conclusion' we hope to summarize the fruit of our labour and its implications for future studies on the parables of Jesus.