CHAPTER THREE

In his hand
The thing became a trumpet; whence he blew
Soul animating strains -

- William Wordsworth

THE PARABLES
OF CHRIST:
A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW
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3.1 Christ’s Parables: A Content Analysis 46

3.2 Christ’s Parables: A Thematological Categorization 51
3.2.1 God 53
3.2.2 Faith 56
3.2.3 Love 58
3.2.4 Forgiveness 60
3.2.5 Kingdom of God 62
3.2.6 Devotion 65
3.2.7 Renunciation 69
3.2.8 The Second Coming 72
3.2.9 Women 76
3.2.10 Force of Evil 78
Chapter Three

The Parables of Christ: A Bird’s-Eye View

All this knowledge and insight he turned to use in the revealing of God to men. We might say, therefore, that Jesus used the parable method because it was the clearest and most forceful way of bringing home His message.

- Hugh Martin

3.1. Christ's Parables: A Content Analysis

This chapter attempts a content analysis and categorization of the parables of Jesus Christ. It also endeavours to give a thematological categorization of the parables, with a view to establishing the common ground for comparison. The thematological categorization shows the basic parameters and conceptual framework for purposeful analysis of the parables of Jesus Christ. The content analysis is confined only to a few representative parables in order to highlight the general mode of delineation of the comparison and the spiritual (moral) truth as presented by Jesus Christ in his parables.

The parables of Jesus Christ are very few in number, yet bear great spiritual truth. Jesus Christ’s parables¹ are classic examples of a literary genre.

that 'quicken understanding by putting truth in a vivid way' and they 'challenge' the listeners 'to action, to make men do the truth'. The parable of "The Sower and the Seed" is about a sower who sows seeds. A few seeds fell on the way side and the birds picked up the seeds. A few fell on the rocky place. They grew up and since the root was not very deep they faded. A few fell among the thorns. The plants grew up but the thorns prevented their growth. A few fell on good ground and bore fruits a hundred fold.

The meaning of the parable is given out by Jesus Christ himself. The sower is the preacher and the seed is the word of God. When the word of God is sown, the devil picks it away. The rocky ground prevents the spiritual growth in man. Since his faith is not deeply rooted, he cannot stand firmly for God. The word of God sown among the thorns stands for the believers who accept the word of God and try to grow in the Lord. But the hardships of this world pester them and deprive them of the love of God. The word of God which fell on the good ground signifies the believers who stand firm in God and bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

The parable of the "Ten Virgins" is about the bride who is going to meet the bridegroom. Ten virgins went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them had lamps and sufficient oil to keep their lamps burning. Five virgins had
lamps but not sufficient oil to keep their lamps burning when the arrival of the bridegroom was delayed. It was midnight and the bridegroom tarried. The foolish virgins begged the wise virgins for oil. The wise virgins refused to give oil and so the foolish virgins went to purchase oil. In the meantime, the bridegroom appeared and took the wise virgins with him to his place. But the foolish virgins were despised and the door was shut.

The bridegroom is God and the bride is the people of this world. The true believers live a witnessing life by shedding the light of God since they have the Holy Spirit with them. This parable is about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

The parable “The Wheat and the Tares” pictures a man who had a wheat field. In that field the seeds were sown, but while he was sleeping the enemy sowed weeds at night. The wheat grew up along with the tares. The servants saw this and went and told it to their master and asked if they could pluck the tares. But the master told them that if they plucked the tares they would root up the wheat plant as well. He allowed the tares to grow along with the wheat plants till the reaping season. The reapers would gather the wheat and store it in the barn and the tares will be gathered and burnt. This parable is about the last judgment. The wicked are allowed to grow with the
righteous and only on the Judgment Day the wicked will be punished and the good will be rewarded in heaven.

The parable of “The Prodigal Son” is about the story of a father who had two sons. The elder son was very obedient and well behaved. But the younger son demanded from his father his share of the property and squandered all the money by living a luxurious life. But when he had no money he went in search of a job. He got the job of looking after pigs and then only he remembered his happy life in his father’s house. He regretted his folly and returned to his father with a heart of repentance. His father was overjoyed to see his son coming back and ordered a feast and blessed him abundantly. This parable reveals the truth that God feels very happy when a sinner repents and reveals the immense love and act of forgiveness of God.

“The Wedding Garment” is a parable about a master who called the people to attend his son’s wedding. But the invitees failed to attend the wedding. So he asked his servant to call all those who were found on the wayside. Many people attended the wedding. When the master went to visit his guests he found one without the wedding garment and he was thrown out.
This parable is about the Judgment Day when God will come in all his glory to judge the people of this world. The wicked or the unrighteous will be punished and the righteous or the good will be rewarded in heaven. The wedding garment refers to salvation of the soul. Only those who are saved can enter the kingdom of heaven.

"The Lost Sheep" is a parable which tells of a shepherd who had a hundred sheep. While he was leading the flock he found that one sheep was missing. So he left the ninety-nine sheep and went in search of the lost one and was overjoyed when he got the lost one. This also proves God's love towards a sinner. The parable of the "Lost Coin" presents the joy of a woman who lost her coin and got it back. She swept the floor till she got the coin. This parable too reveals God's love towards a sinner.

The parable of "The Good Samaritan" is a story about a traveller who was waylaid by the robbers and was left wounded. Two passersby failed to help him and they gave priority only to their personal matters and each gave an excuse. But the Good Samaritan stopped nursed the wounded traveller and took him to hospital and met the whole expenditure. This parable answers the query "Who is your Neighbour?" Only a person who is really a friend in need is the real neighbour. The Good Samaritan who helped the wounded traveller
is the neighbour. The people who were supposed to help him failed to help him. Only a Samaritan helped him.

"The Mustard Seed" is a similitude used by Jesus Christ. The mustard seed is compared to the Kingdom of God. The mustard seed is very small in size. But when it grows up to a very big tree it provides shelter to all the birds, animals and human beings. Similarly the Kingdom of God, though its beginning is insignificant, it starts spreading everywhere, to every nook and corner of this world.

3.2. Christ’s Parables: A Thematological Categorization

Jesus Christ, the most articulate parabolist has utilized the method of speaking in parables to make the listeners or readers get a clear view of what he taught. He has enlightened the people with this simple way of teaching the divine truth of the kingdom of heaven, the salvation of the soul and the God-Man relationship that God expects from man in order to attain the eternal bliss in heaven.

Jesus Christ taught the common mob who were neither lettered nor educated enough to comprehend the spiritual mystery that shrouds the deep
theological perceptions of a religious teacher. Necessity, therefore, urged
Jesus Christ to employ a simple easily comprehensible method to explain the
meaning of the Kingdom of God, and God, his relationship with man and the
importance of the soul which is eternal. This naturally led him to use a
literary device in the form of a story bearing a moral, just like the seed inside a
seed coat and this indeed is the most effective literary device, called the
'parable'.

The disciples of Jesus Christ who were with him always and who
followed Jesus Christ in all his dealings could not understand why Jesus Christ
adopted this literary device of the parable and they even went to the extent of
enquiring why he followed the parabolic method which he very deftly
handled. Jesus Christ explained to his disciples very clearly that since they
lacked scholastic learning and theological mastery, divine experience and
eternal wisdom, he was rather bound by the compelling socio-historical
environ in which he was placed to employ the parabolic method.

“And great multitudes flocked around him, so he went into a ship and
sat and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And he spoke many things to
them in parables [ . . . ]” (Matt 13.2). The disciples came and asked him, why
Jesus Christ spoke through parables. He answered that in order to make the
educated and uneducated comprehend the spiritual truth he had to use the parabolic device. He said:

[... ] Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given [...]. Therefore speak I to them in parables; because they seeing see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. (Matt 13.11-13)

The disciples listened to the teachings of Jesus Christ with awe and wonder and extracted answers from him.

Jesus Christ’s parables, when viewed thematically, mainly focus on the love of God, faith, love, forgiveness, Kingdom of God, devotion, renunciation, Second Coming and force of evil.

3.2.1. God

Jesus Christ’s parables do not present a logical definition of God either through affirmation or negation but project Lord God as the omnipotent God who because of his great love for mankind has given his only begotten son to the world, to sacrifice himself for the sake of sinners, for the redemption of mankind offering eternal life.
God who is the symbol of love is paradoxically furious in judging man. The parable “The Wicked Tenants” (Matt 21.33-46, Mark 12.1-12, Luke 20.9-13) reveals how God destroys the wicked men and passes judgment upon man. Man thinks that God is partial but his blessings both to the righteous and to the unrighteous prove that he is impartial. Of course God is a terror to a sinner for he gets angry with a sinner if he continues to commit sin even after repentance. But at the same time Jesus Christ, in his parables, presents God the Almighty as God of forgiveness. This precept of ambivalence is so very characteristic of the way Jesus Christ presents God or the God-head notion in his parables.

God is presented in Jesus Christ’s parable as a judge, king, shepherd and father. In the parable, “The Lost Sheep”, a shepherd had a hundred sheep and when he lost one sheep, he left the ninety-nine and went in search of the lost sheep. He was overjoyed when he found the lost sheep. This shows the abundance of love that God has for mankind.

Jesus Christ, who is the son of God as the Holy Scripture says, revealed God to man. “I and my Father are One” (John 10.30). Bucke comments on

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the basic idea of fatherhood: “Fatherhood as applied to God epitomizes his sovereignty as voluntarily acknowledged Judge of all” (433). Bucke further goes on to explain the multifarious aspects of fatherhood.

It is not despite but because of his severity that he is also the God of mercy, the God of hope, of peace, of comfort, of graciousness, the father of mercies able to forgive. It can hardly be invoked as serious evidence to the contrary but he voluntarily accepts as the father, the cost of reconciliation. There are very few passages in the New Testament where it is not clear that the estrangement between man and God is on man’s sake and not God’s (433).

Finally Christ’s parables present God as the Creator longing to enter into perfect fellowship with man and vice versa. Man’s heart is the dwelling place of God. This is the temple of the living God. If a man lives a pure and righteous life the Holy Spirit dwells in him; if his life is impure the evil spirit possesses him and destroys his life. As St. Paul succinctly puts it, reflecting on the similitude of Jesus Christ: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1 Cor 3.16). Again in the Book of Revelations the similitude assumes an added vigour and fresh impetus: “Behold I stand at the door and knock, if anyone hears my voice and opens the
door, I will come into him and dine with him and he with me” (3.20). As Bucke points out:

In keeping with the Biblical distinction between the Creator and his creation the New Testament never presents man’s true end in terms of deification (apotheosis) but as perfect fellowship with God. The nearest approach to the apotheosis idea anywhere in the New Testament is the unique phrase that — you may — become partaker of the Divine nature. (320)

3.2.2. Faith

In primitive Christianity faith means acceptance of the Gospel message. The message was God’s redemptive action culminating in sending Jesus of Nazareth (Gaebelien 230). Man must have strong faith in God and given faith is a form of grace given to man only by God. The parable “The Sower and the Seed” reveals the truth that by faith man can bear fruit. The parable also throws light upon the strong faith that a man must possess to accept the *logos* (word) in order to attain salvation and grow in the Lord. The message of the parable reinforces faith as the basic essential in one’s spiritual quest or the quest for spirituality, that is, only those who accept the spiritual message with strong faith alone can bear spiritual fruits. This parable conveys the importance of faith in God and envisages that a man must continue to grow in the Lord, leading a witnessing life to bring the others closer to God.
Jesus Christ has very often emphasized that one must possess the faith of a child (Mark 10.15) to enter the kingdom of heaven. Faith can move even mountains and perform great miracles (Matt 21.21; Mark 11.23). More about faith in God is revealed in the discourses of Jesus Christ rather than in his parables. In the parable of “The Sower and the Seed”, the bird is the symbolic representation of Satan who can prevent an individual from growing in the Lord. The devilish action deprives one of faith in logos. Still there is the eschatological faith: “Even though there are thorns and birds, one day surely it will bear fruit a hundred fold” (Jeremiah 1.50).

Man must have the unshakable faith in God so that he can overcome the evil forces that attack him in his life. His foundation must be strongly built on the rock of God so that even when rain and storms come and shake him he will not be destroyed. To illustrate this strong faith in God, Jesus Christ narrated a parable “The Two Houses” (Luke 6.48,49). A house was built on sand. But when rain and storm came the house fell down. Another house was built on a rock. Even when rain and storm attacked the house it was strong and it did not fall down. Similarly if a man's faith rests on the foundation of God, that is, with the strong faith in God, he will cling to God and survive in this world even though hardships and trials and tribulations of this world
pester him and beset him. Faith in God can lead a man to reach the kingdom of heaven.

3.2.3. Love

Jesus Christ, himself the symbol of love, sacrificed his life for the redemption of man. Jesus Christ brought with him the eternal message that he came to the world not for the sake of the righteous but to lead sinners to repentance. His parables “The Prodigal Son”, “The Good Samaritan”, “The Lost Coin”, “The Lost Sheep”, all disclose the abundance of love that God has for man. In the synoptic teaching of Jesus, Jesus as the symbol of love is explained:

Jesus reveals the meaning of love by his life and the Church proclaimed that this was because he is the unique son of the Father. Not only so, Jesus himself seems to have claimed this status. However, in the Gospels he is recognized from heaven as the beloved son. But the most significant fact about the role of Jesus is that his mission was thought of in terms derived from the image of the servant of the Lord, to heal the spiritually sick and to do wonders among men as one in whom the spirit of God was at work. (Bucke 169)
Jesus performed miracles not for his fame but because of his deep love for mankind. His aim was to save the sinner and he taught that people would taste the love of God if they were healed in body. The only commandment that Jesus Christ offered for the entire mankind is “Love one another”, “Love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matt 19.20). In the parable “Good Samaritan”, the love for the neighbour urged the Samaritan to help the wounded man. Love is revealed and the general spiritual truth “Service to man is service to God” is demonstrated in this parable.

Jesus Christ is more concerned with the downtrodden, the oppressed, the sinner and the weak, for a strong one does not need the loving care and the tender mercies of the Lord. Jesus Christ has also preached that one must love God wholly with all his heart, with all his soul and with all his spirit (Matt 22.34-40). He expects man to love him sincerely and not be a hypocrite in love. The importance of love is emphasized in all his teachings. “Love your enemies” (Matt 5.44) is the main teaching of Jesus Christ which is very difficult for a human being to practise.

The similitudes ‘The Lost Coin’ and ‘The Lost Sheep’ also bring forth the abundance of love that God has toward a single soul. A woman happens to lose a coin and she sweeps the floor till she comes in possession of that coin. A shepherd, who has a hundred sheep, goes in search of a sheep that
gets lost. He is much worried about the single sheep that is lost and is
overjoyed when he finds that sheep. Similarly God is very much concerned
about a sinner and heaven rejoices when a sinner repents and turns over a new
leaf. The unsurpassed and unlimited love of Jesus Christ is reflected in these
two similitudes. Thus love is the central theme of his teachings.

3.2.4. Forgiveness

Jesus Christ’s parables focus on the act of forgiveness, which is the
very essence of one’s religious life and one’s being in fellowship with his
maker, God the Almighty. Jesus, the symbol of forgiveness, sacrificed
himself for the sake of sinners. His very act of forgiveness is seen in the
words uttered while hanging on the cross (Matt 23.44-48). The parable of
“The Prodigal Son” is a living literary monument on the noble act of graceful
forgiveness. In this parable the disobedient son, getting his share from his
father, lives a luxurious life and when his friends despise him he realizes his
folly and returns to his father asking for forgiveness. The father
magnanimously and unconditionally forgives him and loves him more than
before, and is so overjoyed that he arranges a feast. Similarly, God the father
in heaven will forgive those who return to him even though they have deserted
God and have gone astray. “The parable was not only a rebuke to the
enemies, it was also an appeal spoken in love. Jesus longed that they should change the way” (Hargreves 52).

The parable of “The Two Debtors” also portrays the nobility of the act of forgiveness. A debtor who had to pay his debt of one hundred denar was pardoned by the person to whom he owed the money. But as soon as he was allowed to go free from paying the debt he approached the person who was in debt to him and dealt very harshly with him. Jesus Christ narrated this parable in order to stress the significance of the act of forgiveness. Jesus Christ was himself an abiding witness and a living example demonstrating the act of forgiveness. He forgave even the people who crucified him. He prayed, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do” (Luke 23.24).

Jesus taught his disciples the true meaning of forgiveness and to forgive a person even seven, seventy times (Matt 18.22). Even in the teaching of the simple, honest, direct prayer to his disciples, the Lord Jesus Christ taught thus: “And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us” (Matt 6.12) a forgiveness born out of compassion and undying love for one’s fellow-beings. Thus his abundance of love for mankind and his equally merciful act of forgiveness is revealed much in his teachings through parables.
3.2.5. Kingdom of God

Almost all the parables of Jesus Christ centre around the spiritual idea and the eschatological significance of the Kingdom of God. As Bucke says, "The theme of Jesus' proclamation and teaching, however, is the Kingdom of God with particular stress upon its eschatological significance" (653). In the words of John the Baptist, "The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent ye and believe the gospel" (Mark 1.15) which represents repentance rather than the actual presence of the Kingdom of God. Jesus Christ summons the entire mankind to be prepared to meet him when he comes in his entire glory with the angels.

In the parable of "The Ten Talents", one was given ten talents, another five and another two. The persons who had ten and five talents doubled them by striving hard whereas the person in possession of the two talents kept it safe hidden in the mud. But when the master returned he rewarded the persons who laboured hard for him and punished the man who kept the talents idle. God will give each person talents according to his own will. But if anybody does not use it God will take away the talents that he had bestowed upon him. Those who toiled hard for the glory of God will be rewarded when he comes to the earth to judge the people, that is at the second coming on the
Judgment Day. The reward can be expected not only in this world but also in heaven.

Similarly, in the parable “The Wedding Garment”, the person that was not with the wedding garment was rejected and he could not enter the Kingdom of God. In the parable of “The Ten Virgins” Jesus Christ reveals the great divine truth that those who are not prepared will be rejected when he comes in all his might and power to judge the mankind. The five virgins with lamp and oil were accepted by the bridegroom, but the five who had lamp and insufficient oil and went to purchase oil were rejected by the bridegroom. All these parables reveal the same truth: “to keep watch and pray for we know not when the bridegroom comes”. He may come like a thief to judge the earth.

The parables “Dragnet” (Matt 13.47-50) and “The Sheep and the Goat” (Matt 25.32-35) express the truth that the unrighteous and the unholy will be separated from the righteous and they will be punished with eternal damnation in hell whereas the righteous will enjoy the eternal bliss in heaven, the kingdom of God. He will say, “Come, ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt 25.32).

The divine secret of inheriting the kingdom of God is revealed in all these parables. The “Mustard Seed”, “The Leaven” (Matt 13.33-35) and “The
Pearl” (Matt 13.45-56) disclose some aspects of the kingdom of God. Though these parables are mere comparisons they show the multifarious dimensions of the kingdom of God. “In my father's house there are many mansions” (John 14.2). The smallest beginning leads to its triumphant end. The mustard seed being the smallest of the seeds grows to a huge tree giving shelter for all the birds, which build their nests on its branches. The kingdom of God is also like a mustard seed though its beginning is very small. The kingdom of God is vast, for in God's house there are many dwelling places for the souls who lived for the glory of God.

The subject of the parable of the “Mustard Seed and the Heaven” is the progress of the kingdom of God. William M. Taylor points out:

The mustard seed is the prominence to the external contrast between its small beginning and its ultimate magnitude and the leaven is the method of its internal operation and the universality at the diffusion of the last a great result from a small beginning (60).

Throughout his ministry, Jesus Christ admonishes all to repent and turn to God for the kingdom of God is at hand. The purpose of Jesus Christ in coming down from heaven to earth is to establish the righteousness, peace, justice and love of the kingdom of God. He has said, “For what shall a man
gain if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?” (Matt 16.26). The importance of the soul and its dwelling in heaven is specifically pointed out in all his parables in relation to the kingdom of God. Thus the parables of Jesus Christ can be said to be a reinterpretation and a reassertion of the kingdom of God as was conceived by the ecclesiastical authority of the Jewish faith. But Christ gives a fine humanistic touch to the Jewish theological concept and makes the theo-centric and God-centred Kingdom of God, homo-centric and man-centred kingdom of heaven, all out of God's love for man, God's noble act of forgiveness and above all God's desire for everlasting fellowship with the entire mankind.

3.2.6. Devotion

The parables of Jesus Christ is a constant spiritual reminder for a believer to fulfil his vision and mission. “The blind cannot lead the blind” (Matt 23.34). And one must have the single-minded devotion to serve God. Mad materialistic pursuits and deep spiritual quest cannot co-exist.

One cannot serve two masters. No one can serve two masters for either he will hate the one and love the other or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. (Matt. 6.24)
To follow Christ one must take his cross and follow him. A true believer of God will have more suffering than happiness. Life is not a bed of roses; it is a mixture of sorrow and joy. There is no crown without the cross. Christ’s similitude sharply focuses on the spiritual truth that narrow is the path that leads to eternal bliss and only very few go through that path. Many will seek broad ways, which will lead to eternal damnation (Matt. 7.13,14). The path of glory leads but to the grave. Man must be completely detached from the love and pleasures of this world.

The parables “The Wedding Feast” (Matt 22.14; Luke 14.15-24), “The Talents” (Matt 25.14-30), “The Labourers in the Vineyard” (Matt 21.33-44), all propagate the strong sense of devotion a man must have in serving the Lord. In the parable “The Wedding Feast”, a man invited the guests to attend his son’s wedding. The special invitees failed to attend the wedding. So the master ordered his servants to go and bring whosoever they saw and they came to the feast. But there was a man without the wedding garment. The master ordered the servants to throw the man into the hell. “For many are called but few are chosen” (Matt 22.14).

The person who laboured hard to earn more possesses in exceeding measure devotion, dedication and sincerity. The parable “The Labourers in the Vineyard” shows that God is the all powerful presiding deity all over the
universe and he has power to do as he wishes, but it is the duty of his devotee to labour hard for him. As Eta Linnemann says:

Any of Jesus' listeners who ventured on world understand Jesus as the one who has proclaimed God's time of grace with full authority, but those who remain close to his word must raise the demand crucify him, this man blasphemes God (88).

The owner of the vineyard hired the labourers to work in his farm. Those who laboured under the heat of the sun and who came earlier were paid the wages for their work, wages for the full day of their work. But those who came late and worked for fewer hours were paid the same wages. The labourers who toiled for a long time thought that they would be paid more. This parable is paradoxical with provocative connotations. It is an object lesson to the servants of God. Those who think and claim that they have laboured hard for the Lord in doing God's ministry may not be rewarded by God because they may not have served according to the will of God, with the single-minded devotion that God expects of each of his devotees and each of his avowed followers.

A reader or listener of this parable may think that God is partial, or will naturally be led to subscribe to the view that God takes sides and that his sense
of justice is arbitrary, partisan and discriminatory, evidently verging on the borders of, to use a jargon in the modern parlance, favouritism. But as William M. Taylor perceptively points out:

The parable is the expression of the spirit rather than the portrayal of an individual or the description of class. It is a story with a purpose. Therefore the purpose of this parable is to enlighten the man with the divine truth that God is impartial and encourages man to do him service according to his call for what he sows he will reap (108).

This parable, therefore, can be said to be an attack on the hypocrites especially the Scribes and the Pharisees who claim themselves to be pure and sure to inherit the kingdom of God. They are like the white sepulchers whose outside appears to be glamorous and attractive but inwardly they are corrupt and wicked with evil intentions and ulterior motives. For the Lord himself has said that, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts and neither your ways my way” (Isaiah 55.8).

The parable “Dishonest Steward” (Luke 16.1-13) in a similar way satirizes the insincerity and hypocrisy of the dishonest steward, the pseudo-devotees. A rich man had a steward who gave false accounts. Jesus Christ points out that there are people who consider themselves to be wise but are
unwise and claim themselves to be the children of light when they are the children of utter darkness. Jesus has stated that one must be like the light of the world and the salt of the earth (Matt 5.3-16).

A true disciple of Christ must live a witnessing life and follow the footsteps of Jesus Christ. He must love his enemies, must pray for his enemies and must not curse them. If he is slapped on one side of his face he must show the other side (Matt 5.39). The path that is laid by God through his son Jesus Christ is very difficult to follow. But it is necessary that a true follower must follow all the ways laid out by Jesus Christ with a piety and devotion that go far beyond the logistics of the humanist thinkers or the logical deductions of a limited human brain which is incapable of fathoming the inner depth of God's divine grace for man.

3.2.7. Renunciation

Jesus Christ, leading an ideal model life and fulfilling God's vision and mission by not being corrupted by this world, stressed, in his parables, the need for detachment from the earthly pleasures to attain salvation and eternal liberation. A man in order to inherit the kingdom of God must be completely detached from the lusts and pleasures of this world and he must be a free bird totally divested of the cares and worries of this filthy world.
Jesus has pointed out that it is very difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven just as it is very difficult for a camel to enter the eye of the needle (Luke 18.25). The reply given by Jesus Christ to a rich ruler regarding the way to inherit the kingdom of God bears the same truth that a rich man cannot enter the kingdom of God. The rich ruler approached Jesus Christ and confessed that he was following all the commandments laid down by Moses. And he enquired what else he should do to inherit the kingdom of God. Jesus Christ advised him to sell all that he had and to give them to the poor in order to inherit the kingdom of God. This is very difficult for a lover of wealth to practise in his life.

Renunciation or detachment from wealth and worldly pleasures leads one towards the kingdom of God. One may perform many miracles but still he may be a lover of the world. He who loves the world will be an enemy to God and when Jesus Christ comes to this world to judge the world he will simply say “I know ye not” for it is very difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God (Matt 10.25).

Jesus Christ taught in another parable “The Rich Man and Lazarus” (Luke 16.19-31) the humble message of renunciation and how difficult it is for a rich man to enter heaven. The rich man enjoyed all the privileges and
pleasures that the world could give him and revelled in the luxuries of this
d fell the expense of the compelling, basic human need of his own fellow-
being, his own brethren. But the poor man Lazarus sat near the gate of the
rich man begging and the dogs licked his wounds. When, however, they died
Lazarus went to heaven and the rich man went to hell. The rich man suffered
from thirst and he wanted a drop of water to be given by Lazarus. He further
wanted information to be sent to his brothers who led a very luxurious life that
they may not suffer in hell like him.

Renunciation is necessary for any man to enjoy the eternal bliss in heaven. All through his sojourn on earth Jesus Christ stressed the necessity for renunciation. About the rich fool what Leon Morris has said is worth recalling: “He is trying neither to serve God nor to help the other people. He is not even concerned to have a richer and fuller self indulgence” (201). The words of Jesus Christ too, in this context, are quite revealing. “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and loses his own soul or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matt 16.26).

The parable “The Rich Young Ruler” is also interpreted as an attack on the Jewish officials of all kinds who see the ruler in the gospel as a group of people distinguished from the elders, scribes and highpriests. Jesus Christ has
taught the people that they should not worry about tomorrow. In one of his similitudes Christ exhorts that He that feeds the birds and the creations of His mighty hand will feed everyone (Matt.6.26). So man should not store anything worldly like the Israelites who stored manna (Exodus 16.19-26) in the wilderness “for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matt 6.21).

Jesus taught his disciples “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal (Matt 6.19). Man must not worship the worldly things as idols. Merely keeping an idol and worshipping it is not idol worship. If a man pays more importance to anything than the ways of the Lord or loves a person or any particular thing more than God, then surely he cannot be called a child of God because he is a slave of these worldly things which are now his ‘idols’. Man must be completely detached from the worldly pleasures and not stained by these ‘idols’ of external damnation and disastrous forebodings.

3.2.8. The Second Coming

The doctrine of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is an underlying recurrent motif in his teachings and parables. He had to come to the world at first to fulfil the will of God the Father in heaven, to redeem mankind from
sins. He has laid the path for eternal life and it is the duty of man to follow that path. Again he is going to come the second time with inundated fury and righteous indignation to judge the earth. Christians believe in the second coming, theologically termed as the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. The parable of "The Ten Virgins" is an eschatological, apocalyptic commentary on the final mission of God for the entire mankind. Christ stresses the need for eternal preparedness on the part of man to receive God when he comes on the Judgment day. There is an allegorical representation of his parable where a man must have the born-again experience and the anointing of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1.8).

The foolish virgins were without salvation and the burning fire of the Holy Spirit and so they could not shine in their life and reveal the glory of God to man, whereas the clever virgins were able to shed the light of God among the fellow-beings and they lived a witnessing life. When the bridegroom appeared late at night the clever virgins were taken to heaven whereas the foolish were despised and hurled headlong into the eternal agony of hell spewing with brimstone and fire.

People should be over-alert and ever-prepared to meet God when he comes again. They should be spiritually-ready to meet him for Jesus Christ
has said, “Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh” (Matt 25.13). According to Jones:

The early Christian interpreted the Bridegroom as Christ and midnight as Parousia (Second coming). The sudden coming of the Lord is the unexpected time of the Parousia. The warning cry is exhortation to the band of disciples. Julicher referred to using this parable as an allegory. He expresses that the genuinity of the parable is lost by interpreting it as an allegory (17).

The parable “The Wedding Garment” also reveals the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the judgment that is going to be ordained by God. The one without the wedding garment is thrown into the outer darkness. ‘The Wedding Garment’ can be interpreted as ‘Salvation’. Those who have attained salvation can inherit the kingdom of God.

Another parable, “The Wheat and the Tares” may be treated as an allegory full of symbolic representations. A man sowed the seeds in his fields. When they grew up there were also the tares along with the good plants. The servants asked their master whether they could remove the tares. But their master replied to allow both the good and the bad to grow until the reaping time when the tares shall be thrown into the fire and the good seeds shall be
stored. This parable reveals the truth that the righteous and the unrighteous may be allowed to thrive in this world until the last Judgment Day when God will come to judge the people of this world with his final commission. The righteous will be rewarded in heaven and they will enjoy the eternal happiness whereas the unrighteous shall perish in eternal damnation. "He who is unjust, let him be unjust still, he who is filthy, let him be filthy still, he who is righteous, let him be righteous still, he who is holy, let him be holy still" (Rev 22.11).

The Second Coming of Jesus has an apocalyptic overtone "And behold, I am coming quickly, and my reward is with me to give to every one according to his work" (Rev 22.11,12). Thus during the Second Coming of Jesus Christ judgment upon mankind will be the inevitable design of God for the entire homo-centric universe. Christ' parables metaphorically lay claim to the strong belief that there is a Judgment Day when the righteous will be rewarded by God and the unrighteous will be punished. Eta Linnemann makes the issues raised by the parables of Jesus Christ clear:

A tension existed between the two groups of sayings of Jesus [ . . . ], the belief and hope of Israel was based up with the concept of the kingdom of God. In later Judaism faith became autonomous over against the belief and was merely separated
from it. People thought that they were living in present that was empty of salvation, and hope for a fame filled event overflowing by faith and it is such as the overtaking and incorporation of hope by faith (38).

The world is full of corruption and injustice. Wherever we turn, we see people wallow in sin and wickedness for personal aggrandisement. Truth has been washed away from this world. Selfish men are trying to thrive by harassing the humble and oppressing the meek. So the people of this earth are longing for a judge to come and judge the people, for worldly judges are also corrupt and filthy. This is the metaphorical delineation of the Second Coming that God will come again in all his glory and might and power and judge the earth amply rewarding the good and mercilessly punishing the wicked. For as the parables of Jesus Christ make it clear man has chosen to deliberately ignore the grace-period that God grants him with love, patience, long-suffering, forgiveness and above all timely admonitions and chastisements.

3.2.9. Women

Although Jesus Christ had no women disciples (among the twelve whom he chose as his disciples and called them to be fishers of men), and

3 Other than the twelve disciples (all men) whom Jesus Christ anointed and empowered to proclaim the word of God by healing the sick, there were a lot of women followers and devotees, who were
though he had not offered any parables relating to women, he had with him women believers and followers and, in a way, co-workers like Mary (Mother of Jesus, Matt 1.18), Mary Magdalene (Luke 8.2), and the two sisters of Lazarus, Mary and Martha (John 11.1). Christ looked upon them as God’s supreme creation, paragons of all human virtues, and divine embodiments of sacrifice and selflessness.

But Jesus Christ’s relationship with women is here presented in the hope that it would help to authentically establish the fact that he always strove for gender justice, and empowerment of women and that he fought for the total liberation of women, mercilessly attacking gender discrimination and male chauvinism. The tradition of the Jews is that a Jew should not indulge in any conversation with a Samaritan and more so if it were a women. But Jesus Christ broke the fossilized inhuman tradition by conversing with the Samaritan woman and prophesied about her. Christ’s discourse with the Samaritan woman about matters that were considered to be the spiritual legacy and the religious prerogative of the Jews is a clearer trans-cultural pointer to the fact that Jesus always treated women as being equal to men in all respects and in all matters relating to the finer sides of the human spirit and the human aspirations.

also his disciples in his earthly ministry in the sense that they supported the ministry, with their prayers and offerings.
Of course, there is no parable in particular relating to women or the man-woman relationship, although the entire earthly ministry of Christ well abounds in instance after instance of evolving a broad-based womanist paradigm which provides for a shift in perception of women and looking upon every woman as an autonomous human person in God, just like every man, breathing the air of freedom, responsibility, joy and peace.

3.2.10. Force of Evil

In the parables, “The Wheat and the Tares” (Matt 13.24-30, Mark 4.26-39) and the “Sower and the Seed”, Jesus Christ presents the role played by the evil force, the devil preventing salvation of the soul. The force of evil, that is, the wicked designs and the manipulative machinations of the evils forces, makes man go astray from the chosen path of God. In “The Wheat and the Tares” the devil sows the seeds. But in “The Sower and the Seed” the devil devours the seed. The wheat is allowed to grow along with the tares and only during the harvest season the wheat is gathered and stored whereas the tares are thrown into the fire. Only on the Judgment Day the virtue is rewarded and the vice is punished. In the words of Jones “The message of the parable is the message of the judgment to come and the task of separating the godly from the ungodly must be left to the great harvest of the world” (105).
The parable "The Wheat and the Tares" has multiple layers of connotative meanings at different levels. As Candour says, "The tares he suggests are a reference to the traitor among the disciples who might have been tempted to leave Jesus" (105). There is the inevitable force of the evil on man but man has to hearken the voice of the divine. There are the good and the bad angels and man may undergo conflict between the two forces, but should choose the good and reject the evil. For the devil will creep like a serpent into the heart of man and tempt him to commit sins.

Jesus Christ himself had the temptation of the devil after fasting for forty days. Satan took Jesus Christ to the top of a mountain, showed all the pleasures of this world and asked him to worship him. Jesus chased the devil and overcame the temptation by stating that man must worship only God the father in heaven (Matt 4.10). If Jesus Christ, considered to be the Son of God, had such temptations because of the evil, then it is no wonder how much Satan would tempt man. That is why Jesus Christ insisted upon watching and praying every minute to resist the temptation of the devil. The simple message of the parables relating to the force of evil is that if one stands up against the devil, the devil will flee in no time. But if one is afraid of the devil, the evil force will take advantage. Ultimately, therefore, what matters is the
strength of character strongly built on the impregnable rock of faith and total surrender to God.

Thus the force of evil is admonishingly emphasized through some of the parables of Jesus Christ. God has allowed the deeds of the devil also to thrive ("Wheat and Tares") along with the deeds of Good, but evil deeds will be punished at the Second Coming of Jesus when the righteous will enjoy eternal bliss in heaven and the unrighteous eternal damnation in hell.