The parable is not a crutch for limping intellects, but a spur to spiritual perception.

- T.W. Manson
CHAPTER SEVEN
SUMMATION

7.1 Thematological Perspective 220
7.2 Formalistic Perspective 236
7.3 Christ and Ramakrishna the Ideal Parabolist 240
Chapter Seven

Summation

That passage (Turn the left cheek if the right be smitten) you cannot expunge from the Bible; that passage embodies the soul and substance of the Christian faith; without it Christianity were like any other faith. And that passage will yet, by the blessing of God, turn the world.
- Herman Melville

My religion is to learn. I read my Bible better in the light of your Bible and the dark prophecies of my religion become brighter when compared with those of your prophets. Truth has always been universal [...] We Hindus accept every religion praying in the mosque of the Mohammedans, worshipping before the fire of the Zoarastrians, and kneeling before the Cross of the Christians.
- Swami Vivekananda

7.1. Thematological Perspective

From a thematological viewpoint the parables of both Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa convey the same spiritual truth though in different angles and soaked in different spatio-temporal realities. As parabolists par excellence Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa have exemplified the spiritual truth about God, God’s relationship with man and those attributes of divine virtues that man ought to possess to become an inheritor of eternal bliss, besides a life of divine affirmation after death.
Jesus Christ’s parables in fine poetic language offer an imaginative reconstruction of the general belief of the Christians of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the Last Judgment day. The parable “The Ten Virgins”, “The Wheat and the Tares” and “The Wedding Garment” reveal about the second coming of Jesus Christ and the last judgment. The Christians believe that God will come in his glory to reward the righteous and punish the unrighteous.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa has stressed the importance of Brahman and how man, through a process of renunciation, can attain the Ultimate Reality. He has also stressed the need for concentration in meditation and total detachment by performing yoga by man. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa has to reach the samadhi stage in order to reach Brahman. He believed that there is only one God and that God can have many name like Rama, Krishna, Allah and Jesus Christ. Romain Rolland has pointed out:

Nevertheless Ramakrishna presupposed his own belief that God is in everything that he is everything, and that therefore follows that whoever opens his eyes and look around him will of necessity and by meeting him. The union with God and such a deep and constant reality in his case that he fed any need to
prove it, and he would never have dreamt of imposing it on others (197).

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa can be said to be the progenitor of the very idea of the harmonious union of all religions. He did not want to impose the truth of the unity of religion on others by force. But he wanted to share his spiritual experience with others and make them understand the truth about the universal God in whom the entire mankind are his children, brothers and sisters. And thus Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa ardently promoted the global concern for universal humanhood.

People quarrel with one another claiming that their own form of worship is the real one. He feels sorry for quarrelling with each other for a simple matter. His parable “How They Quarrel” reveals this. In whatever way one worships, the aim is the same, to reach the same goal, the same ocean where all rivers and tributaries unite and whose vast expanse provides space for the confluence of the seas too. Ironically enough, man’s eyes have become blind and his eyes must be opened to see the spiritual truth.

But the way Jesus Christ’s parables expound the notion of God is diametrically the reverse of Paramahamsian exposition of the doctrine of God-
Jesus Christ gives expression to the eschatological doctrine that he is the way, the truth and the life, as he is the son of God. His parable "The Wicked Tenants", where the son of a landlord is killed by the tenants with the ulterior motive of unlawfully taking possession of the property, clearly points to such a notion of God-head. The son is interpreted as Jesus Christ himself who will be killed by the people and that he will sacrifice his life for the sake of sinners.

All religions teach love and love is the central theme of the teachings of Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. The parable of Jesus Christ "The Prodigal Son" reveals the love of God, the father in heaven. "The Lost Sheep" and "The Lost Coin" are also parables revealing the love of God to a sinner. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa also, through his parables, reveals the aspects of the divine and man in the divine state, a manifestation of God's love in man. God's love flows naturally into the heart of man if he becomes divine.

The parable "The Best Offering to God is Love" is a classic example of the exposition of the divine truth that whatever one offers, be it big or small, it is love alone that matters in the final reckoning. This parable in all its intensity and depth of concern reflects the parable of Jesus Christ about the
offering given by a widow, who had only one coin as her own possession which she offered with all her heart, mind and soul to God. God accepted her offering as the best offering as it was an offering born of a love that would not expect anything in return.

Faith is an oft-recurring significant motif in the parables of Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. Faith is necessary for a man to attain Brahman. Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s parables do conform to the commonly-held religious belief that faith can perform great miracles. Both the parabolists express that all that it requires is the faith of a child to see God. One must yearn like a child to see God. But at the same time Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa are fully aware of and alive to the danger in having faith to perform miracles. Performing miracles is good if it uplifts a person’s responsibility. But if it brings pride in him, then it is dangerous and disastrous.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s parables are a constant reminder of the lurking dangers of occult powers. One may become famous if one has occult powers. But if he goes spiritually proud or a religious-degenerate, then the occult powers are of no use at all. Jesus Christ exhorts his disciples and followers to seek for the fruits of the holy spirit and not the gifts of the holy
spirit. Faith is the free passport to see God and reach eternal life. But faith should not be miscarried as a weapon of abject dangers and incalculable harm for the human person.

The force of evil occupies a predominant space in the parabolic expositions of Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. The evil forces prevent man from attaining salvation and experiencing the all-pervading Absolute. According to Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, the evil forces are women and gold, craze for worldly pleasure and carnal desires that are a hindrance to self-actualisation. One must come out of these self-imposed cubicles, that manacle man to the dying animal of flesh, to realize the divine in him. One must be completely detached from the dictates of lust and over-indulgence of this world, and just like a lotus leaf that floats in water which does not get stained with water a man, even when he is in the world, must elevate himself to the transcendent space of the Ultimate and the Absolute.

The evil force is in man is none other than his own self. He has to be cautious about the world around him as it relates to his self and its irresistible quest for eternity. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, therefore, insists on the imperative need for getting rid of the ego ‘I’. Then only the man can be
saved. It is the crux of painful paradox and inescapable irony of life that even a devotee drifts away from the path of God when Tamas, Rajas and Satva try to put him in chains. But he must free himself from the chains and this can be done by the grace of God alone. God alone can make one pure and save his soul.

Jesus Christ points out the necessity to fast and pray to resist the temptations of the devil. The seed sown by the preacher into the heart of man is taken away by the devil. The devil is always at hand to tempt him to commit sins. Sin and salvation are explained in simple but concrete terms in the parables of Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. A prostitute may go to heaven. But a person who accuses her of prostitution may suffer in hell. Sin is, then, not the act but the hidden intent behind the act. It is the malafide intent that prevents man from being penitent and blinds his self. But if a person surrenders with a penitent heart, making amends for his sins by resorting to the power of the holy name, it washes away the sin from birth. A king who killed a Brahmin was purged from his sin, when in a similar state of the soul he uttered the holy name of Rama three times.

According to Jesus Christ, adultery is a sin and if a person sees a man or a woman with a lustful eye that person is committing adultery with her or
him. But the sinful act in itself does not bring about the divine wrath. The Samaritan woman and the woman who was caught in the act of adultery were mercifully forgiven for the simple reason that there was the earnest, unquenchable thirst in them to give up their sinful life to realize the divine grace of God. All are sinners and all need God's mercy. No one, therefore, is vested with the moral authority or the divine right to pass judgment on his fellow-being. That is precisely the reason why Jesus Christ asked those who had not committed a sin to cast first stone at the women caught in the act of adultery. St. Paul's exportation “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3.23) is thus a clear pointer to the fact that it is not the law and the commandment that saves a soul but the mercy and the grace of God.

Forgiveness is a major theme dealt with by Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, since the very sinful nature of man entails the gospel of redemption through forgiveness. Jesus Christ himself is the symbol of forgiveness. “The Prodigal Son” and “The Two Debtors” are supreme parabolic expressions of the noble virtue of forgiveness. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa demonstrates the unequalled virtue of the rarer act of forgiveness in the parable in which the guru, who threw the milk offered by the poor woman out, is forgiven by God and is offered as a free gift, the glory of the vision of God.
God reveals himself not only to a self-righteous sinner when he comes out of his shell of self-indulgence, but also to a righteous person, who lives in the Lord. The Lord appears before Narada who forgets his duty to bring water to him. He forgives him and reminds him of his mission. Thus the nobility of the act of forgiveness is not directly proportional to the intensity of the sin one has committed, but is independent of any pre-determined states of human existence or the man-made codes of life, because forgiveness is the supreme manifestation of the Supreme Being, as the most charitable act of the divine mercy and the divine grace.

Renunciation is the stepping stone for the spiritual growth in man. Both Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa have discussed the spiritual significance and the social relevance of renunciation. A man must renounce, wealth, gold and woman to reach Brahman. One may think if all the people in this world renounce wealth, woman and gold, then how can a person live in this world as a family. This is the question which will arise in the mind of an individual. Perhaps one may think that the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa about renunciation is for a devotee and not for an ordinary man. This view is entirely a wrong notion. What evidently Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa implies is that a man can live in the world, but he
should not get stained by the world and he should not become a slave of it and worship it as an idol.

In Jesus Christ also one finds in a greater degree the ever reverberating message of renunciation. One cannot serve two masters; the world and God. Jesus Christ insisted on the purity of one's heart. One must become like a child to enter the kingdom of heaven. His parable "The Rich Fool" and "The Rich Man and Lazarus" basically exhort man not to fall a prey to the world of attachment, for it is more difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to enter the eye of a needle. To Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa renunciation does become the willing submission of the self to material loss of wealth and pleasures and spiritual gain of poverty and ecstasy.

The theology of the Kingdom of God, in the final reckoning, sums up the overall parabolic exposition of Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's aim is to bring unity among all religions, a stage in which he envisaged the realization of God's kingdom in universal peace and pluralist co-existence. The central thrust of Jesus Christ's teaching is on the Kingdom of God, a state in which there prevails universal peace and justice, love and tolerance. All his parables and
similitudes focus on the eternal magnificence of the kingdom of God. As a metaphor the kingdom of God is a mustard seed, leaven, pearl and coin. "The Ten Virgin", "The Wedding Garment", "The Wicked Tenants" and "The Wheat and the Tares" forcefully drive home the glad tidings of the kingdom of God to man.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's notion about the kingdom of God basically relates to the diverse aspects of the Divine and the single-minded path one ought to pursue to reach the 'Brahman'. A man can reach Brahman only if he loves all God's creations alike, showing no signs of distinction and discrimination, and only if he subjects himself in total surrender to a willing sense of detachment of the self. Only if a person humbles himself like the poor women disciple who offered milk to the guru, he can see God and enter God's kingdom. Humility and self-surrender, thus, become the necessary preludes to realize Brahman, the Absolute.

The doctrine of Maya is essentially an oriental or Vedantic contribution to the theology of world religion. No wonder, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's parables present in all its poignancy the role maya plays in the life of a man, especially in kindling spiritual force in the devotee. Maya takes the incarnation to fulfil the will of God. At the same time maya is equally
dangerous because it poses itself as the invisible barrier preventing man from experiencing, internalizing and realizing God, the Supreme Being. But *maya* vanishes the moment it is known. *Maya* creates and destroys spirituality in man. It may be argued that the illusory perception that Jesus Christ delineates may be, from a purely supra-religious viewpoint, equated with the oriental notion of *maya*. And in order to attain salvation one must strive hard to get rid of *maya* (Luke 6.19).

God-incarnate, in the sense of *avatars*, is a theological doctrine alien to the Christian faith and Christian religion. But God the Incarnate in the sense of God’s intervention in human history in the form of His son Jesus Christ for the redemption of the entire humanity, is the very fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith. The doctrine of incarnation as Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa presents in his parables takes into account both *avatars* and God’s intervention in human history for man’s salvation. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s story from the *Ramayana* that there are many Krishnas as explicated in the parable “Thus Saw Arjuna” and the parable in which Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa shows how ‘God came incarnated into the sow’s body to destroy the demon to save the just and the righteous’ clearly brings out the differences in perception between these two great master parabolists in conceiving the idea of incarnation.
Similarly yoga is essentially a religio-spiritual doctrine evolved in the Indian philosophical tradition. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's parables centre on the importance of performing yoga to reach Brahman. One must pass the three stages of Sadhana, Nirvakalpa and Samadhi through yoga, the mental concentration needed for spiritual medication, to reach Brahman. The regular, disciplined performing of yoga helps a person realise himself from the pleasures and pressures of this world and get united with God, in a state in which all stress and tension vanish into empty nothing. He regains full concentration in meditation. But, sadly enough, even a yogi is likely to drift away from his path if he succumbs to the temptations of this material world.

Yoga, thus, fundamentally being an eastern theological construct, does not find any echo in Jesus Christ. But the samadhi stage a person reaches as a result of rigorous yoga practice may be argued to resemble the transfiguration of Jesus Christ with his disciples in Mount of Transfiguration, when his raiment became pure white and Jesus for his disciples were transfigured. This can be considered as the Samadhi stage, as interpreted by some vedic scholars, when one becomes united with God.

Humility, the noblest godly virtue, is the central fulcrum and the impregnable pivot on which one builds the fort of salvation. Humility, as a
divine attribute, thus becomes the focal point of the parabolic expositions of Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. All their parables effectively present humility as that one essential quality to begin to realize the immense vastness and the eternal glory of the supreme being. The absence of humility in the absence of Atman. The absence of Atman is the absence of the self. And the absence of the self leads to the emptiness of self-actualisation and the impossibility of self-realization.

While maya, yoga and incarnation essentially remain vedantic theological concepts, or when viewed in a broader spectrum the seminal components of Indian philosophy (oriental), the theological precept and the apocalyptic vision of Second Coming or the Last Day of Judgment remains basically a Christian doctrine or a Christian (occidental) perception of God's judgment and justice for the entire human race at a specific temporal moment in human history. But metaphorically (and even metaphysically) the Second Coming may be construed as a continuous process of cleansing of the human soul, and more so the human existence in relation to its inscrutable human environment. Whoever subjects himself to the divine will escape the judgment and the others are consumed in the holy fire of the divine wrath.
The parable "The Ten Virgins" is, in fact, an allegory that attempts to interpret the eschatological subtleties of the second coming of Jesus Christ. From the eschatological viewpoint Jesus Christ, as he has gone to heaven, will come back again to this world during the last judgment day. This belief not only gives fear of the last judgment but it also makes man live a pure life and always be in a state of preparedness for he fears that he may be punished in hell.

But in Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, naturally enough, there are no traces of the doctrine of eschatology. But the pointed reference to rebirth or the transmission of soul would augment well for the argument that God does not want to punish any one and hence the perceptual shift and the non-eschatological paradigm in Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. Man is born again and again in this world till he is purified and loses all his darkness (of evil and ignorance) and sheds light to be united with God, once he forever crosses the sea of life and death, the ocean of time and space. This common belief in the Hindu faith may be, in a way, related to the eschatological precept of punishment for the perpetrators of the Satanic evil ways in hell and protection and promotion for the upholders of truth, peace and justice for the poor and the dispossessed in heaven.
In short, the thematological commonness, with of course peripheral differences, and the unity of vision mark the grandeur of the parabolic expositions of Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa in their earnest divine endeavours to uplift man to the abode of God. Both of them have used the parabolic method with a surpassingly greater degree of power, force and persuasive effectiveness in conveying the spiritual truths of almost the same magnitude, range and depth. Slight wonder, this method has reached its perfection in the hands of these great parabolists in unearthing spiritual mysteries.

Although for academic convenience a parable may be squeezed out to yield certain desired results, no parable should be stretched beyond the principal object of composition, for this will tantamount to distorting the parabolic context and the parabolist’s message. As the exegetic commentator of the Revised Standard Version of the Harper’s Study Bible rightly puts it:

A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Spiritual truth is unfolded in everyday language and figures. The details of a parable should not be presented beyond the principal object of the composition. Each parable has a main point and was spoken to make that point easily apparent (1458).
7.2. Formalistic Perspective

The parabolists Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa have used symbolic representations in allegories. Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa may, therefore, be christened as perfect symbolists who semiotically exploited the signs and symbols in the allegorical form, perhaps anticipating the science of semiotics, to impart a moral or a spiritual truth. Their supremacy as parabolists lies in the way they have adopted symbols to portray the facts in a very realistic way and in a more vivid manner so as to make the readers or listeners comprehend the truth in a more apparent manner. Of course, at times the semiotics of the parables in the use of symbols and signs confuses a reader/listener.

But the parabolists Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa have handled the medium of parables in such a way that the truth, though concealed, is made clear by their explanations. When Jesus Christ compares a mustard seed to the kingdom of God, it clearly reveals that the mustard seed is a symbol of the kingdom of God. Not only in the allegories of Jesus Christ, but also in the parables and comparisons there is the symbolic representation of facts. One can discern in the parables of both Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa a beautiful semiotic blend of two religious
traditions and cultural realities, since the message conveyed demystifyingly manifest a unity of purpose and a unity of vision.

Similarly, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa uses loincloth and gold as symbol of the lusts and pleasures of this world. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's fables are also symbolically narrated. The brick, the coin in the parables "How a Yogi Slips from Yoga" and "Such is the Pride Money Begets" are symbolic representations of the lusts for wealth. Therefore, it can be inferred that for both the parabolists Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, the semiotics of the symbolist presentation must have held out a metamorphosing dynamics of its own in expounding the meaning of God-Man equation, precisely which they attempted to do in their parabolic discussions and allegorical homilies.

The symbolist-parabolic method could easily lend itself to presenting complex religio-theological concepts at varying levels with multiplicity of interpretations. Such a symbolist-parabolic strategy makes the task of the parabolic preacher equally easier in the sense that this helps him to present the complexities of the subject matter in as comprehensively compact a manner as possible without giving room verbal jingoism or obesity of linguistic expression. For instance, in describing the kingdom of God Jesus Christ has,
besides the mustard seed, used the parables of leaven, coin and pearl which provides the delineation a micro-cosmic brevity which otherwise would be a strategic impossibility.

But at the same time the symbolist-parabolist is also well aware of the fact that symbols when used by the symbolists become more complicated, confusing and harder to grasp without appropriate explanations. Surprisingly both Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa have chosen to offer explanations wherever necessary and therefore a reader/listener is not left with the bewilderment of not being able to understand or follow the message. For instance, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s symbolic representation of facts in allegories such as “In the Forest of the World”, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa takes pain to put the message straight by explaining in as lucid a manner as possible, the three symbols of Tamas, Rajas or Satva which stand for darkness, worldliness and truth.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa is as much a parabolist as he is a fabulist. He finds truth both in the animate and inanimate objects. And they speak to him the divine truth. In his fables the animals speak. Jesus Christ has also used animals in his parables, but they do not speak. In the parables “The Sower and the Seed” and “The Prodigal Son”, there are references to a bird
and pigs that are used to develop the story and to bring out the spiritual truth, but the bird and the pigs are as dumb as any non-human animate object is.

Similarly at another level Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s use of Sanskrit words, even when he spoke in Bengali, often made it difficult for his listeners/readers to understand effortlessly the meaning of the message. And there was Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa offering interpretative explanations. But Jesus Christ’s parables, narrated in the Aramaic language are very simple and clear without the mix of any confusing Greek word of expression. This very much contributed to the style of narration of the parables of Jesus Christ in an impressively persuasive indigenous idiom.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s parables excel in humour and there is the blending of the sensuousness and fun. One is able to enjoy reading the parables of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and at the same time nourish the spiritual truth in it. In Jesus Christ’s parable there is humour, but humour of a different kind, a humour which is the homiletic and artistic by-product of a satire or an irony. He is very sensuous in his narration of the parables and his parables do not entertain the reader/listener as Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s do.
Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s parables are in the form of a short story or brief narrative bearing a moral or spiritual truth in it. This superior form of instruction can be handled only by experts and artists with the inspiration of God. No doubt, Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa have artistic skills to paint the spiritual truth in the form of a story and convey a spiritual truth. They have the talent of inventing imaginary stories, aptly narrated to fit the spiritual truth they wanted to convey. Their parables though not lengthy yet are replete with all descriptions. They thus assume the status of a ‘mini short story’.

7.3. Christ and Ramakrishna, the Ideal Parabolists

Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa are undoubtedly the greatest parabolists the world has ever seen. Parables in their hands became a very effective, supple and flexible device to convey the divine truth, the spiritual mysteries, moral values and God-Man relationship for the liberation of the entire humankind. In other words, the parables acquired an altogether new dimension and a new impetus of life as the powerful literary device in the hands the great creative artists Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa.
Jesus Christ chose to speak to the people in parables to make the hearers feel more at home, relaxed as a member of a large congregation and to make them follow his “sermons” with as little effort as possible. Once when the people who thronged to listen to him began to feel the tedium and tandrum of the homiletic process, then the message would lose its force, strength and life. Indeed both the parabolists, Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa have expressed this fact clearly when their disciples asked them the reasons for their speaking to them in parables. Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa drew their material for the parables from real life and nature, which was very familiar to the common mob. Hence the parables of Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa have an unfailing universal appeal.

Thematically both Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa have dwelt at length almost on the same spiritual wave length, but their findings based on their parabolic expositions had their own unique socio-cultural and politico-religious flavour. Christ was occidental in the sense that he was unraveling the divine wisdom as manifested in the holy scriptures of the Israelites which Christ was, in a way, reinterpreting depending upon the immediate socio-spiritual context in which he was placed. Similarly, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was oriental in the sense that he was unraveling
and reinterpreting the divine wisdom as manifested in the holy scriptures of
the east, particularly in India.

But the overall impact of both the preachers and the technical
excellence of the literary device they handled, that is, the parable in the
broadest sense of the term, was something unprecedented in human history.
Both Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa came in a highly religio-
spiritual tradition which had unmistakably established itself among the people
as an accepted way of life. But owing to the passage of time that which ought
to have been the way of life, eternally pulsating and ever vibrant with the
undying spirit of the scriptural message, remaining a force of animation and
liberation, it generally got conventionalized in course of time and socio-
culturally, religio-philosophically and even theologically became fossilized.

Thus a life force became a dead weight. They way of life became a
social obstacle for liberation. Purity was misinterpreted as external
observance of meaningless rituals. The clergy who ought to speak with
authority became a religious authoritarian. Man was not for Sabbath but
unfortunately the Sabbath was thrust upon man. Inevitably, the ultimate victim
was the very men and women for whose salvation and liberation the very
instruments (incarnations) of God came down to this human earth.
Historically Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa belong to a specific socio-cultural and politico-religious context, which demanded a desperate reinterpretation of the ancient scriptures in order that the question of faith and religious belief and moral living would be as lively and animating a force as it was envisaged in their Holy Scriptures. Basically, therefore, the responsibility that Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa were called upon to shoulder was tremendously onerous and very challenging indeed. Both of them were great scholars, well-read, had a profound understanding of not only the scriptures but the social habits and way of life of their contemporaries as well.

But it became all the more difficult for the parabolists because both Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa had to take the mysteriously inscrutable message of God to very ordinary men and women who were not only unlettered but were socio-economically backward and politico-religiously oppressed and marginalized, passionately craving for the glorious moment of physical as well as spiritual liberation.

Philosophical discourses, religious homilies, spiritual interpretations, exegetic commentaries and such other means of talking to the common man would not bring Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa anywhere
near the man whose redemption and liberation was the sole mission of these great men of God. To maintain an intimate contact and a meaningful rapport with the mass which thronged around them demanded a powerful communicative device; such a device would not only bring these shepherds closer to the sheep, but would also make themselves and their message more acceptable as an integral part of the congregation with an identity that borders almost on proximate intimacy despite distant delineation.

The advantage in explaining the meaning of the parable was its inherent fictional content and story value. But even as the story unfolds itself in the form of a simple narrative, it would also drive home a divine message of a profound moral with the force of the hitting of a hammer. The spiritual thrust of the thronging multitudes will also be quenched. All old religious values and ways of life began to glow in a new light. They assume an added fresh vigour and refreshingly new complexion. The common men and women could understand without much of mental strain, the divine truth. Thus the parables, perhaps no literary device other than the parable, has effectively served the divine purpose of these two noble men of God.

Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa distinctively stand out as supreme examples of ideal parabolists because of both the subject matter
they dealt with and the mastery of the parabolic device as related to its subtle technical excellence.

In the present study an attempt has been made to study the parables of Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa purely from the thematological and formalistic points of view. The major themes dealt with by Christ and Ramakrishna in their parables have been analysed in detail in this study. This clearly establishes the fact that despite superficial differences, there is an underlying commonness in the method, approach and attitude of both Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa towards issues that are basically religious, spiritual and moral.

The present study also makes it clear that the differences are mostly due to their contemporary socio-cultural reality and as a result of their religious commitment rather than on account any basic conceptual or ideological differences. It is true that there are basic issues relating to the kingdom of God and Second Coming as expounded by Jesus Christ and \textit{maya}, \textit{karma}, rebirth, incarnation and \textit{yoga} as expounded by Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. But since they are deeply philosophical and theological issues, no attempt has been made to study the contributing factors of contrasts.
Even with regard to the so-called commonness and similarities the underlying conceptual differences between the surface realization of God and Brahman, love and renunciation, role of women and wealth have not been attacked as specific theological or cultural issues in the study. The literary merits of the medium of parable as handled by Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa have only been hinted at and not systematically worked out as this itself would require time and space for a separate, independent study of the parables of Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa.

All that the present study has undertaken to investigate is how far there are similarities and differences in the major themes and formalistic aspects of the literary device as handled by Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa for discussions and interpretations of which both of them resorted to the medium of the parable. Since Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa are the instruments of God with divine inspiration with a religious avocation, there was usually a commonness in their approach to almost all the puzzling fundamental aspects of human existence and human life on earth. It is this commonness that served as the take-off point for the present comparative study. Accordingly, the major themes dealt with by Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa were arranged subject-wise and
subjected to a rigorous analytic scrutiny and the basic tenets established. A similar procedure was also adopted for the analysis of the parables of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa.

The comparative study has brought to light the striking similarity, in spite of the inevitable differences between the attitude of Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa towards mankind in general. What is much more revealing is the evolution of their personalities in the process of explicating the difficult aspects of the holy scriptures through simple parables.

In the handling of the parabolic form Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa have proved to be great masters with the craftsmanship and excellence of technique rarely ever witnessed in other parabolists. Their power of imagination, effective use of symbols, imageries, the humour and pathos and the serious tone of Jesus Christ together add to the charm and beauty of the parables. They are, no doubt, great artists who painted the spiritual truth in a very realistic way. No doubt, Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa stand out as unparalleled parabolists in offering the most difficult spiritual concepts and abstract religions values in simple, easily digestible and popular capsules of the parabolic form.
As long as the human persons need spiritual pabulum for their inner sustenance and as long as there is the inescapable inner quest of the human soul for its maker, the Lord Almighty, the spiritually regenerating and morally reinvigorating parables of the divine mystics Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa will forever be remembered, transcending the spatio-temporal limitations, for their moral fervour, spiritual succour, enlightened mission, unity of vision and universal message of love and tolerance and peace and justice. The spiritual seed is sown by these parabolists and they will grow up to be a huge tree, its branches will spread everywhere throughout the world and bear fruits a hundred fold from generation to generation, from ages to ages, and indeed from yugas to yugas.