

**THE STORIES OF THE
KINGDOM, A STUDY OF
THE PARABLES OF JESUS**

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The stories of the Kingdom, a study of the parables of Jesus by G. R. H. Shafto

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A STUDY OF THE PARABLES OF JESUS

BY

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PREFACE

THIS book is intended for those who wish to study for themselves the stories which Christ used in His spoken ministry.

Believing that a satisfactory understanding of the parables can be reached only by relating each and all of them to the central purpose of Christ's teaching—the Kingdom of God—I have arranged them with a view to keeping that relationship always before the reader. There is, inevitably, overlapping in the scheme: some of the stories form a link between the ideas of the preceding section and that in which they are placed and others cover wider aspects of the Kingdom than their particular section-heading suggests. In every case the position assigned has reference to what seems to me the main truth conveyed by the story.

We have no means of deciding whether any of the parables with a "human interest" do or do not relate literal facts. We do not know whether the Tale of the Lost Sons was a bit of family history known to Jesus; nor can we tell whether He ever

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met some person who had been wounded on the Jericho Road and succoured by a Samaritan. I do not see that it concerns us greatly. Dr Jacks has said that Jesus' method consisted in fixing people's attention on some of the innumerable details of common life in which eternal values are revealed. That seems to me a very true saying, and I have tried to keep it in mind.

Unless we observe the cardinal principle of relevancy we shall meet with little success in the study of the parables, and I would like to reiterate what has been said by other adventurers in this field—that two sets of things may have the same mutual relations though there is no resemblance between the things themselves. For example, the shepherd and the sheep may give a beautiful picture of the relations of our Lord and His folk; but if likenesses between Christians and sheep are to be insisted upon in every direction the figure will soon become merely ludicrous. Resemblance misleads when we depart from the essential *relation* which is the ground of the comparison instituted by a parable. This is what is meant here by the principle of relevancy.

Readers familiar with the subject will recognize my indebtedness to a goodly company. Some are referred to in the text. Students who have access to Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible* will often find

PREFACE

helpful matter under headings suggested by the subjects of the various parables and the special article on "parables" by Plummer, vol. iii. pp. 662f., deals very ably with the many problems involved. Hastings' *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels* may be similarly used with advantage. *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, by Dr A. B. Bruce, gives much detailed study and helpful exegesis. For the Lucan parables Dr Plummer's volume on Luke in the International Critical Commentary is useful. A modern translation of the New Testament, Moffatt or Weymouth, should be consulted continually.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Rev. Hugh Martin and the Rev. J. R. Coates for some most helpful suggestions.

G. R. H. SHAFTO.

WESTMINSTER, 1922.

Tho' truths in manhood darkly join,
Deep-seated in our mystic frame,
We yield all blessing to the name
Of Him that made them current coin ;

For Wisdom dealt with mortal powers,
Where truth in closest words shall fail,
When truth embodied in a tale
Shall enter in at lowly doors.

And so the Word had breath, and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds
In loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought ;

Which he may read that binds the sheaf,
Or builds the house, or digs the grave,
And those wild eyes that watch the wave
In roarings round the coral reef.

In Memoriam, xxxvi.

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