

Institute for Christian Teaching
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**TEACHING THROUGH PARABLES:
FOLLOWING JESUS**

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"The parable is, has been and always will be,
the language of the wise for speaking to the simple,
and the language of the simple for speaking to the wise..."¹

Jesus conveyed some of his most interesting teachings through parables, although there were many other means of communication in his days, apparently more direct and conventional. It has been calculated that about one third of Jesus' teachings transmitted in the synoptic gospels have come to us in the form of parables.² The teaching of Jesus is so much related to parables, that when the word "parable" is mentioned many associate it immediately with Jesus and the Gospels. However, the parable (called in Hebrew *mashal*), is quite a common genre in rabbinic wisdom and oriental literature, largely widespread through all times, milieux and cultures around the world.

Why did Jesus choose this particular literary genre of "parable" to convey some of His most important messages?

My essay has two aims:

1. To find the main reasons of this choice, through an analysis of the parables taught by Jesus, paying attention both to their content and to their narrative structures.
2. On the basis of this model, to set a pattern for an eventual use of parables in religious education in our days.

While I seek to integrate faith through parables in my own teaching, I hope that my study will be valuable for those who, like me, work in the not so easy task of the religious education of youth and young adults, in a secularized society, where fiction plays such an important role.

I. What is a parable? The problem of definition

To know the genre of a document is the first step to understanding it. Each genre, by its own nature, requires a different reading approach. We do not read in the same way an article

in a law code and an article in a newspaper. We do not read in the same way a page of history and a poem.

The term "parable" has been largely defined as a "short simple story from which a moral lesson may be drawn"³. This is why it is commonly applied to different literary genres, ranging from the tale and the fable to the allegory and the myth. In fact, many do not see a true difference between them, and they easily confuse these different forms. But if we want to be more precise, we soon find that the parables of Jesus are quite different, and a little more difficult to define.⁴

a) Some associate the gospel parable with the *fable*.

The fable is a short "fictitious story meant to teach a moral lesson"⁵. This is the way in which fables were traditionally used by the Greeks, the Romans, the Arabs, and their cultural heirs. The Bible also contains a few fables like "The Trees and the Bramble" (Judges 9:8-15), or "The Thistle that Wanted to Marry the Cedar's Daughter" (2 Kings 14:9). The main intention of the fable is to criticize human weaknesses. This is done indirectly, for example, by means of intelligent reflections of talking plants or animals.

But this is not the case with the gospel parables. In them, plants or animals – the tares, the mustard tree, the lost sheep or the fish in the net – never express their feelings or opinions. Only human beings talk. And besides that, very few gospel parables could be classified under the category of moralizing literature.

b) Others have tried to relate the gospel parable with what the Greeks called *myth*.

The myth was a legendary story designed to illustrate or explain realities difficult to grasp in rational terms, such as the phenomena of nature, the origin of humankind, or the religious roots of a people.⁶ Thus, for example, in order to point out the danger of self-love, the ancient Greek liked to refer to the myth of Narcissus – the beautiful youth who,

after Echo's death, is made to pine away for love of his own reflection in a spring. He ended up drawing and being changed into a flower, always trying to embrace its own image. The didactic interest of the myth is not in its historical value, since there is none, but in its permanent existential truth.

Although most of the parables also underline permanent truths, their style is completely different from the myths. There is in fact nothing mythic or legendary in losing a coin, or in finding weeds in a field of corn. These are everyday realities that have little in common with myths.

c) More often the parables have been associated with *allegories*.

Allegories are narratives "in which people, things, and happenings have a hidden or symbolic meaning".⁷ The Old Testament contains many allegories. One of the best known is the allegory of the vineyard (Isaiah 5:1-7), where the vineyard represents Israel; the owner is God; the hedge and wall, the divine protection, etc.

For many centuries, the gospel parables were regarded as allegories, and interpreted accordingly. But this view was refuted by Adolf Jülicher at the end of the nineteenth century, and the best studies produced after him agree that parables are something different from classic allegories.⁸ In fact, although the parables may also have allegoric elements, there is a key difference between the two in the fact that allegories are usually static, while a parable is always a story, even if it is often very short and simple, culminating in an unexpected end.

Although the parables of Jesus may seem close to the tale, the fable, the myth and the allegory, and certainly have something in common with them, they have their own peculiarities that make them somehow unique.

- d) This is why attention should be paid to the fact that the parables of Jesus are called in the New Testament not *allegoria* or *mythos* but *parabolè*.

It is interesting to observe that the term *parabolè* comes from the language of ballistics, from the root *ball-* ("to throw") and the preposition *parà* ("the other side"), with the meaning of "throwing along" or "putting side by side". A *parabolè* (like a *parabola* in geometry) is, first of all, the indirect, curved trajectory of a projectile going from point A to point B over an obstacle. In the same way, the parable, as rhetorical device, is a narrative that allows the story-teller to reach the intended target through an unexpected itinerary, following another path, so that the receiver cannot prevent the result and avoid the impact.

A parable is therefore a story, true or fictitious, with an unexpected lesson brought up by means of comparison. But, contrary to other anecdotes and illustrations, instead of being intended to merely illustrate or amuse, the parable is intended to surprise and to reveal. The narrative brings, in the setting of the familiar, the surprise of the unfamiliar, disrupting the listeners in their expectations or in their perception of reality. This allows the parable to increase the force of its impact.

The fact that the parable often adopts the light tone of a tale does not mean that this genre is less serious than other biblical genres, nor that we can take its lessons less seriously. In fact, it is precisely because the subjects of the parables are so important and deep that they are better transmitted in this way.

II. Characteristics of the parables of Jesus

If we are not very familiar with the gospel parables, at first reading we may be easily tempted to see them as very simple stories. They speak of invitations to banquets, of fishermen casting their nets, of women baking bread, of teenagers leaving home and of

employees who have problems with their bosses. Since these are situations that we all may know by experience, the parables seem to us more accessible than they really are. Their first listeners, however, realized very soon that, behind their modest appearance, the parables were hiding unexpected dimensions. Rather than examples illustrating reality, they carry surprising messages. When we analyse them in depth, we discover that the parables constitute some of the most perplexing and enigmatic passages in Scripture.

What make these stories so special?

1. First of all, they are built on an element of surprise. It is not frequent, nor normal, to excuse oneself for declining an invitation of the king to a royal wedding banquet by claiming that one has bought some oxen that need to be tried out just at that moment! It is not frequent or common that the owner of a business should pay the same salary to the workers who have worked one hour as to those who have worked twelve! The parables are full of mysteries. They teach as much through evidence as through extravagance. Very often their intention is to surprise.
2. Second, the parables make it easier to establish unexpected connections. The parable is built on characters, images and situations already known by the listeners, allowing the storyteller to establish, in a very natural way, unexpected links with new ideas or situations. The art of metaphor rests precisely in the capacity of establishing comparisons between ideas and situations that, at first sight, do not have much in common, thus revealing unexpected truths, and new aspects of reality.
3. The fact of appealing more directly to the imagination than to reason, allows the parable to open more easily the door which leads to the mysterious inner world, in which everyone builds his/her own view of reality, without the pressures, obstacles, complexes and preconceptions of the exterior world. Through fantasy, the parable helps the receiver

to visualize abstract notions and new realities that the spirit is able to conceive and that would be impossible to reach by another way.

4. The narrative language is *par excellence* the language of contacts and relations. The message easily reaches its target when the listener identifies his/her own experience with the story told. This is why stories and anecdotes are much more efficient than direct orders to produce change in reluctant persons. A good story may replace with certain advantages, and in a much more elegant way, all the advice that we are inclined to give and that so often is not immediately welcomed. The mind of the listener, as soon as it captures the message, naturally acknowledges by itself its final intention without needing somebody to dictate it. The solution to the problem comes spontaneously just by presenting it in a different way by means of a comparison:

- This is like sewing a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. This does not work. You need a new coat! (Mt 9:16-17).
- There are moments when one wonders how to face tomorrow. Look at the birds. They do not worry... Are you not much more valuable than they? Why worry about problems that you will probably never have, or that God will finally solve? (Mt 6:25-26).

5. Parables and anecdotes have a seductive effect because they do not impose anything, they do not threaten. The audience has to wait until the end of the story to discover how its lesson applies to his/her personal case. This way of indirect communication respects the autonomy of the listener, leaving him/her the space of freedom necessary to establish by him/herself the connection between the story told and his own situation.⁹

Used rightly, parables, stories and anecdotes have a powerful effect, not only as didactic resources, but also as therapeutic tools. For they are able to overcome, in the simplest

way, our natural resistance and self-defense mechanisms, appealing to our best common sense. To a hesitant, insecure and fearful person, Jesus may say:

- "It is difficult to plow the field looking back at the same time. If you really want to go forward, stop looking through the rear-view mirror." (Luke 9 :62)

This type of indirect message has more chances to be accepted than a direct rebuke. To say "It is not the healthy that need a doctor, but the sick" (Mt 9:12), is wiser and more tactful than saying, for example, "This is not your business"...

6. Many of the illustrations used by Jesus belong to the category of "self-evident metaphors". Their premises work on a hidden form of truism enveloped in an almost irrefutable argument. This use of truism is very useful for giving advice in an indirect way, because it does not hurt the individual nor interfere with his/her liberty. It is formulated just as a description of reality:

- "If the salt loses its saltiness...it is no longer good for anything." (Mt 6 :13)
- "People do not light a lamp and put it under a bowl. They put it on its stand." (Mt 5:15)
- "You recognize trees by their fruit." (Mt 7:16-20)

These statements arouse spontaneously the immediate agreement of listeners, thus avoiding controversy. Since they are logically unquestionable, they are much more efficient than any kind of argumentation, or than any sermonizing. The strength of their impact rests in their ability to convince the listener without imposing anything.

This is the case for many parables, but not for all. Some are really controversial, and some are even comparable to delayed weapons. Joachim Jeremias calls these parables "weapons of war".¹⁰ They are intended to reach a target that may hurt the receivers in their aim to make them to surrender to God's grace.

7. Jesus knew how to combine in his parables spirituality, ethics and aesthetics. In order to touch the conscience of his listeners while respecting the complexities of the human mind, he was a master at the craft of bringing together deep thinking and the beauty of art. As with any good artist, Jesus relied heavily on inspiration. He had his own personal way of looking at reality, with his own perspective and his own viewpoint. His stories have a mirror effect, and help us to see ourselves from God's point of view. This is why they were as fascinating for his first listeners as they are for us today.

III. Why did Jesus teach in parables?

The question regarding the reasons for Jesus' parables was raised from the very beginning by his own disciples: "The disciples came to him and asked, 'Why do you speak to the people in parables?'" (Mt 13:13). The answer is perplexing, because it may be understood in two different, even opposing ways:

- a) According to Matthew "Because they do not see and do not understand" (Mt 13 :11-17), which may be interpreted to say, "in order to help the audience to understand better",
- b) But according to Mark, "so that they may be ever hearing but never understanding" (Mk 4:10-12), it is to say, to "prevent them for understanding!"

If we take both accounts seriously, as equally valid, we may conclude that Jesus' answer may be understood in the sense that his purpose was not a simple one. The parables were intended at the same time, for some listeners as a means to understand the mysteries of God, and for others, as a means to conceal this very same teaching.

Ellen G. White lists the main reasons for Jesus' use of parables in the following way:

1. To illustrate his messages

«In Christ's parable teaching the same principle is seen as in His own mission to the world (...) the unknown was illustrated by the known; divine truth by earthly things with which the people were most familiar.»¹¹

2. To bring new revelation

"Christ sought to remove that which obscured the truth. The veil that sin has cast over the face of nature, He came to draw aside, bringing to view the spiritual glory that all things were created to reflect. His words placed the teachings of nature as well as of the Bible in a new aspect, and made them a new revelation.»¹²

3. To awaken inquiry

"Jesus desired to awaken inquiry. He sought to arouse the careless, and impress truth upon the heart. Parable teaching was popular, and commanded the respect and attention, not only of the Jews, but of the people of other nations. No more effective method of instruction could he have employed."¹³

4. To reach a larger audience

"Jesus sought an avenue to every heart. But using a variety of illustrations, He not only presented truth in its different phases, but appealed to different hearers. Their interest was aroused by figures drawn from the surroundings of their daily life. None who listened to the Saviour could feel that they were neglected or forgotten."¹⁴

5. To protect his message from his enemies

"And He had another reason for teaching in parables. Among the multitudes that gathered about Him, there were priests and rabbis, scribes and elders, Herodians and rulers, world-loving, bigoted, ambitious men, who desired above all things to find some accusation against Him (...) The Saviour understood the character of these men, and presented truth in such a way that they could find nothing by which to bring His case before the Sanhedrin. In parables he rebuked the hypocrisy and wicked works of those who occupied high positions, and in figurative language clothed truth of so cutting a character that had it been spoken in direct denunciation, they would not have listened to His words, and would speedily have put an end to His ministry."¹⁵

E. G. White concludes stating that "in the Saviour's parable teaching is an indication of what constitutes true 'higher education'".¹⁶ In other words, Jesus used parables because this method allowed him to reach more effectively His educational goals.

IV. The pedagogical advantages of parables

As we have seen, parables are a very specific form of teaching, using the advantages of mimesis, the literary and artistic imitation or representation of reality.

As a hermeneutical concept, mimesis through parables is the heir of a long and rich history. At its most basic level, mimesis is the mental ability that allows us to imitate or to represent someone or something in our actions, speech, art or literature, which is the essence of any artistic or literary creation.

Among the diverse forms and methods of teaching available to the educator, the parable has the advantage of appealing, – because of its mimetic nature – both to normal human curiosity and to fascination with fiction. We all like stories.

For a long time, parables were considered as a lower form of teaching, obviously inferior to all the other categories of teaching by analysis, reasoning and deduction. But today the trend has changed, and parables are considered a very intelligent and privileged form of teaching.¹⁷ These are some of the main reasons invoked in favour of parables:

1. Simple forms may convey deep wisdom

In the past many thought that the parable was a primitive form of discourse. Today however, the best scholars affirm just the opposite. They acknowledge that parables may be superior forms of teaching, much more effective than most of the other ways of conveying a message.

2. The known leads to the unknown

The most common way to learn goes from the known to the unknown. Through the all too familiar realities of life – the uncertainty of a harvest, the anguish of a loss, and the burden of a debt – Jesus's parables lead the listeners to the unknown and surprising realities of the spiritual life: God takes care of his creatures, he suffers with his lost children, he is a forgiving father, etc.

3. The concrete leads to understanding of the abstract

The more abstract an idea is, the more it is difficult to formulate. Apparently research shows that the vast majority of people think anecdotically, not abstractly. Great creativity is needed to formulate images capable of communicating abstractions so that they are easily understood by those who receive them. The parables succeed in achieving this in a remarkable way. For example, to explain what Jesus calls "The kingdom of God", He shows in which way God wants to be king of our lives: He is not going to impose His kingdom by force like a Roman general (as some expected from the Messiah); He is going to propose it (as Jesus is doing with his teaching), like the sower who sows seeds in his field.

4. Parables are "never-ending" stories

Because of the mimetic and artistic character of parables, they may be read and reread endlessly, with new insights and ever-renewed benefits for the reader, because of the changing character of personal experience. For there will never be any "last word" about the meaning of a mimetic representation in a text or a work of art. "Every encounter with a work of art is part of the still unfinished happening of the work itself because of the way we recognize *more* than we knew previously".¹⁸

These reasons support the idea that parables were an important educational tool used by Jesus in the transmission of faith.

IV. Teaching through parables

Is it possible, appropriate and convenient to teach through parables today? In the light of what has been said, a positive answer seems obvious. As every teacher knows, it is becoming more and more difficult to compete for students' attention. How can teachers compete with the ever-present effects of the media? "Which strategies will capture the minds of the

students reliving *Rocky IV* violence or fantasizing about an illicit relationship? Unfortunately, the glorious truths of the Scriptures fail to grasp the attention, ignite the imagination, or relate to the needs of far too many students."¹⁹

Young people in this generation "process information in narrative images"²⁰. One way to make Bible truths come alive for students is to present them indirectly through parables. Because our intention is that the students – listeners and readers of our parabolic message – do more than merely understand an idea; we would like them to respond imaginatively and emotionally, that is, with commitment, to a real-life, or even a transcendent experience.

The advantage of the parable over other types of teaching, is that it is by nature playful and *affective*, not cool and detached. The parable plays with the natural curiosity of every human being, and opens the listener to the story told on occasions when a direct, propositional statement would be rejected. This is the reason why Nathan used a parable to convince king David of his terrible sin with powerful results (2 Samuel 12:1-7), and this is certainly why Jesus used parables so effectively. His "parables often drew his listeners innocently into the story and then turned the tables on them after it was too late to evade the issue at hand"²¹.

One of the main obstacles that some Adventist teachers may face, when considering the creation or the use of parables for their own teaching, comes from the traditional reluctance of some to deal with whatever may be called "fiction". Although Ellen G. White admits that some of these works of fiction, "written with the purpose of teaching truth (...) have accomplished good", her general warning is against this type of reading.²²

However, we are convinced that the statements of Ellen White against fiction are not ontological but epistemological in orientation. That is to say, she does not oppose the genre, but the content of most works of fiction. This is why she may be very positive about some pieces of pure fiction such as *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan, while rejecting fiction in general.²³ When she opposes "truth" to "fiction" she does not identify truth with "factual" and

fiction with "non factual" reality. For her "fiction" equates with "error". So when she states that "we must teach truth, nor error or fiction" she does not speak of a literary form.²⁴ In the minds of many of her contemporaries the term fiction denoted the perverted, "harmful form of imaginative writings often designed to exalt sin and sordidness."²⁵

E. G. White would certainly agree that "a piece of literature is not good or bad because it falls in a certain category in classification of its form"²⁶. *Pilgrim's Progress* and Jesus' parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, are fiction from a literary point of view, while they are "true" from the view point of their religious and spiritual intention. Imaginative forms of literature are not evil per se, and therefore, the Bible does not hesitate to use them. And this is why Ellen White was able to clip articles and stories for the *Sabbath Reading for the Home Circle* (1905), that are pure fiction according to a general literary definition.²⁷ Her warnings against fiction do not apply to the type of stories which she included in her anthology for youth, because, according to her definition of fiction, the stories selected for her collection "were true to life, to probity, to honor, to virtue" although were not "all factual accounts of actual happenings".²⁸ For truth versus error is a more reliable basis of choice than fact versus fiction."²⁹

The parables of Jesus have been crafted in such a creative way that the medium and the message are inseparable.³⁰ In these parables, like in other parts of the Bible, the medium serves the message but cannot be separated of it.³¹

We can say, therefore with John Jay Hughes, that in a certain sense, "Jesus' parables are works of fiction. That is, they are made up stories. Like many fictional works, they reflect actual incidents or experiences. The story of the woman searching for her lost coin, and when she found it throwing a party that possibly cost more than the coin she has just recovered, may have originated in an incident from Jesus' youth. The story of the Good Samaritan may have been inspired by an actual mugging on the dangerous road between Jerusalem and Jericho.

The truth of the stories does not depend, however, on their having actually happened. Jesus' parables are good examples of how fictional, made-up stories can convey profound truth".³²

What makes, for example, the parable of the Good Samaritan great literature? "Everything about it: its experiential approach to truth, its sensory concreteness, its narrative genre, its carefully crafted construction, and its total involvement of the reader-intellectually, emotionally, imaginatively."³³ If parables were a suitable tool for Jesus, they may be also a useful tool for educators today.

VI. Educational values better transmitted through parables

Although parables may be useful for teaching many subjects, we find that they are particularly fitted for transmitting spiritual and moral values. This makes them especially suitable for Bible courses.

I have used the "parabolic" approach with success, teaching Bible in high school classes, and have observed and listed several advantages of this method:

1. Working with parables helps to awaken creativity, the appreciation of artistic skills, and the capacity to relate ideals and dreams to the reality of everyday life.³⁴ The parabolic genre helps to bring together reason and imagination, because it is, at the same time, truth and mask, fiction and reality,³⁵ because a person's world view consists of images and symbols as well as ideas and propositions.³⁶
2. The study of parables helps to develop mental agility (thinking by analogy), and the pleasure of searching and finding deeper meaning beyond the surface of appearance.
3. "Parables are a magnificent example of rationality and demand the best intellectual involvement, both in the telling and the hearing."³⁷

4. Reflection on parables helps to develop the capacity of synthesis and analysis.
5. Exposure to parable appeals to the enjoyment of the child in us.

Artistic skills serve "the purpose of intensifying the impact of what is said, but also the purposes of pleasure, delight and enjoyment."³⁸

6. The study of parables by groups helps to develop dialogue skills and the capacity of listening and learning from other sensibilities.
7. The analysis of parables leads to truth from unexpected perspectives.
8. Teaching through parables, the teacher may transmit values, and help the students to grasp truth in an easier, self-evident way, without imposing anything.

In fact, "By expressing what we believe in the language of what we know, we confirm both our beliefs and our knowledge."³⁹

Now the question that comes to mind is how to integrate in a practical way faith and learning through parables in our personal and concrete teaching ministry.

V. Suggested activities for working on parables

We have worked successfully with parables, with high school students, in the Bible class. Here are some suggestions based on personal and professional experience:

1. The most immediate way to work with parables is probably to find one that conveys the message that we would like to share for a certain lesson, and just tell it to the students at the right moment. But there are also many other possibilities.
2. Another option is to ask the students to read a given parable carefully and re-write it by changing some details in order to make the setting more contemporary, while keeping the structure and the message of the text as it is stated in the Bible.

- Adapt, for example, the parable of the Ten Virgins to a contemporary setting, looking for what would replace the oil and lamps today.

- Take the 23rd Psalm and change all the imagery from the shepherd to a mountain guide, etc.

3. It is always useful to challenge the students to summarize the message of the parable in one or two short sentences.
4. A more creative activity would be to retell the parable for people of a certain targeted age or social group (children, teenagers, secularized, rich, migrants, farmers, etc).
5. With more means and time, working in groups, try role-playing the parable (for theater, TV, etc.).
6. Challenge the students by groups to mime or enact the parable without words.
7. Illustrate the message of the parable through news and pictures from the newspapers.
8. Compare the scenario of the parable with similar situations today, taking note of the similarities and the differences.
9. Ask the students to compare themselves with the different characters of the parable and say how they would have acted in a similar situation.
10. Apply the parable to the reality in which the students live (politics, school, family, friends, church, etc).
11. Create modern parables that Jesus could have formulated if he had lived in our time.⁴⁰
12. Reflect on a given modern parable, according to a set of guidelines given.⁴¹

It would seem that our ability to recognize lateral, logic-based illustrative situations is not impaired, even though we are no longer in the habit of turning them into stories to tell to our students. Our difficulties in achieving a certain linguistic sophistication mean that something rather special has disappeared from our culture. Let us hope that this is only a

temporary loss and that we will find new illustrative means of helping our students "to see things to which we have allowed ourselves to become blind."⁴²

In order to get started right away, with a practical example, let's listen to a modern parable:

TRUTH AND PARABLE

Once upon a time, Truth came to this world. She had the mission to teach human kind about the reality of all things. This was a very heavy task.

In order to fulfil her task, Truth tried to speak to the people she found, but some abused her, others hid from her and the rest rejected her...

- Why do they treat me so badly? She cried in a corner.

Parable heard Truth crying and said to her:

- They reject you because they are afraid of you, for you are naked. As you see, here everybody wears clothing. Dress yourself and the people will listen to you.

- How shall I dress myself if I do not have any clothes?

- Don't worry, said Parable. You are beautiful and I am a very good tailor. I will make all the clothes you will need.

And since Truth married Parable and now wears the clothes he prepares for her, many people listen, and Truth continues to fulfil her mission.

(Adapted from Kalil Gibran)

¹ Alfonso FRANCIA, *Educar con parábolas*, Madrid: Editorial CCS, 1992, p. 5.

² Brad H. YOUNG, *The Parables. Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation*, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998, p. 7: "One third of the recorded sayings of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels are in parables. If we do not understand the parables, we miss what may be known about the historical Jesus. One must understand parables to know Jesus."

³ *Webster Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged, Encyclopedic Edition*, Chicago: Ferguson, 1977, vol. II, p. 1,297.

⁴ See on this section, Roberto BADENAS, *Para conocer al Maestro en sus parábolas*, Madrid: Editorial Salefiz, 2002, p. 218-219.

⁵ *Webster's New World Dictionary*, New York, 1970, p. 449.

⁶ *Id.*, p. 943.

⁷ *Id.*, p. 36.

⁸ Robert H. STEIN, *An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus*, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981, p. 53.

⁹ Errol McDONALD, "Have I Got a Story for You: The Narrative Factor in Christian Education", in *Christ in the Classroom*, vol. 21, 1998, pp. 185-203.

¹⁰ Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, London, 1963, passim.

¹¹ Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, Washington DC: Review & Herald, 1941, p. 17.

¹² *Id.*, p. 19.

¹³ *Id.*, p. 20-21.

¹⁴ *Id.*, p. 21-22.

¹⁵ *Id.*, p. 22.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ See David P. PARRIS, "Imitating the Parables: Allegory, Narrative and the Role of Mimesis", *JSNT* 25.1 (2002), pp. 33-53.

¹⁸ Wilma McClARTY, "Why Teach The Bible as Literature?" in *The Journal of Adventist Education*, vol. 51, n. 4, April-May 1989, pp. 23-24, 43.

¹⁹ *Id.*, p. 44.

²⁰ Bailey GILLESPIE, "Church Next: The Transmission of Christian Values during the College and University Years", paper presented at the 3rd *Integration of Faith and Learning Seminar*, Friedensau, 2003, p. 1.

²¹ Leland RYKEN, *How to Read the Bible as Literature*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984, p. 15.

²² Ellen G. WHITE, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students Regarding Christian Education*, 1913, pp. 383-384.

²³ See Department of Education, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Guide to the Teaching of Literature* (1971), in D. Davies, pp. 115-116. The explanation is found, to my opinion, in the ambiguity of the use of the concepts of "truth" and "fiction" in the common English of Ellen G. White's time. This ambiguity needs to be taken into consideration.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 116. "From an intensive examination of her references to fiction, it appears that Ellen G. White used the term fiction to apply to work with the following characteristics: (1) It is addictive. (2) It may be sentimental, or sensational, erotic, profane, or trashy. (3) It is escapist, causing the reader to revert to a dream world and to be less able to cope with the problems of everyday life. (4) It unfits the mind for serious study, and devotional life. (5) it is time consuming and valueless."

²⁵ Paul T. Gibbs, seems to have understood this point well: "I believe Mrs. White meant by fiction what the word most frequently stands for in the mind of the man or woman in the market place or in the kitchen – plotted stories of carnal love, greed, temper – the lurid, cheap magazine story." ("Literature in Adventist Schools", *Seventh-day Adventists on Literature*, Ed. Robert Dunn, Riverside: Loma Linda University, 1974, p. 113-130.)

- ²⁶ H. M. Tippett, "A Review of Some Principles in Dealing with Fiction and Imaginative Forms of Literature in Our Schools", p. 92, cited in D. Davis, p. 56.
- ²⁷ Delmer DAVIS, *Teaching Literature. A Seventh-day Adventist Approach*, Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 2002, pp. 58-62.
- ²⁸ Tippett, p. 94.
- ²⁹ Gibbs, p. 129.
- ³⁰ See Charles W. HEDRICK, *Parables as Poetic Fiction: The Creative Voice of Jesus*, Peabody: Henrickson, 1994, pp. 83-84.
- ³¹ RYKEN, *op. cit.* p. 43.
- ³² John Jay HUGHES, *Stories Jesus Told. Modern Meditations on the Parables*, Liguori, Missouri, 1999, p. 111.
- ³³ RYKEN, *op. cit.* p. 43.
- ³⁴ Shirley A. McGarrell, "Faith and Fiction: An Inspiring Dilemma for Seventh-day Adventist Teachers of Literature", in *Christ in the Classroom*, vol. 14, 1994, pp. 289-307.
- ³⁵ Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 1-5.
- ³⁶ *Id.* p. 21.
- ³⁷ Edwin A. KARLOW, "Parables – A Synthesis of Thought", in *Christ in the Classroom*, vol. I, 1991, p. 176.
- ³⁸ Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 24.
- ³⁹ Karlow, *op. cit.*, p. 178.
- ⁴⁰ To create parables in scientific language, see Karlow, *op. cit.*, pp. 175-192.
- ⁴¹ See, for example, Morris VENDEN, *Modern Parables*, Pacific Press. 1994.
- ⁴² Andrew PARKER, *Painfully Clear: The Parables of Jesus*, Sheffield Academic Press, 1996, p. 116