

摘 要

与一般修辞中的比喻不同，圣经中的比喻所隐含的信息更大范围的超过了它的字面意义。正确解读圣经中的比喻一直是被许多领域的学者所关注的课题。圣经中的比喻究竟想要传达什么信息？这个问题直到今天仍然存在激烈的争论。

圣经中的比喻大部分都包含在《新约》，尤其是福音书当中。前三部福音书都记载有大量的比喻。其中很大一部分在这几部书中同时出现。福音书的作者对这些比喻的叙述是否相同？他们如何展开一个比喻的叙述？本文将以此些比喻的起始句为切入点来解答这个问题。功能语法中的主位述位理论是本篇论文的理论框架。韩礼德的功能语法已被广泛的应用在语篇分析当中，其中的主位分析被证明能够有效的揭示语篇的内在发展模式。本文将以此为基础对两部福音书中比喻的起始句进行分析，力图揭示比喻起始句的主位结构的特点以及不同的主位选择如何实现作者不同的意图。

本篇论文共分为六部分。前两章是引言和文献综述。作者在此对一些重要的概念和在圣经分析以及主位分析领域中的研究成果做了简要的介绍和概括。第三章和第四章分别对《马可福音》和《路加福音》中的比喻的起始句进行主位分析，作者先根据语态将比喻进行分组，再分别对每组的比喻进行主位分析，并进一步解释主位选择是如何为作者传递信息的目的服务的。第五章是在前两章的基础上对两部福音书中的比喻进行比较分析。揭示两部福音书的作者在开始一个比喻的叙述上有什么相同点和不同点，以及他们所关心的主题有何不同。本章主要的对象是在两部福音书中同时出现的比喻。最后一章是对全文的总结。

本篇论文区别于以往研究成果的地方在于将功能语法中的主位分析运用在对圣经中的比喻的分析当中。聚焦于开头的部分，即主位成分存在的部分。将每个比喻都看作是一个段落，通过主位分析找出其主题。文章最后得出的结论是：圣经中的比喻大多以简单主位和无标记主位开头。《马太福音》倾向于将已知信息放于段首主位当中而《路加福音》则倾向于以新

信息开始比喻的叙述。两部福音书中的比喻都有一个突出的主题，两者各不相同。关注圣经中比喻的开头有助于理解整个比喻的主题。

关键词： 圣经中的比喻，主位结构， 起始句， 福音书

Abstract

Different from metaphor or simile, parable contains much more information than it seems to. What message does a parable try to convey? This question has been discussed by a great number of scholars from various fields. And it is still a hotly debated issue.

Most of the parables are found in the New Testament, especially the Gospels. Three of the four Gospels have prolific parabolic materials. Some of the parables have been shared by the two or even the three Gospels. Does the Gospel writers record the parables in the same way or do they leave their own mark in recording the parables? This thesis tries to answer the question by examining the opening words of the parables.

The discussion in this thesis is based on the Theme-Rheme theory of Functional grammar, which has been generally applied to the field of discourse analysis. It is proved to be effective in analyzing the underlying structure of a text. The thesis will analyze the thematic structure of the opening sentences of the parables in the Gospel of Matthew and Luke. The aim is to find out their features in opening a parable and how their openings serve their purpose of writing.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The first two chapters are introduction and literature review. In these two chapters the writer gives an introduction on some important terms and overviews the previous studies on parable and thematic analysis. Chapter three and chapter four discuss Matthew's and Luke's parable opening singly. The writer first separates the parable openings into different groups according to their mood and then analyzes their thematic structures, and in the same time discusses how the different thematic structures affect their organizing of information. The fifth

chapter compares the thematic features of the openings of the two Gospels. It focuses on the parables which are shared by the two Gospels and discusses the similarities and the differences of the two Gospels by analyzing these parables. The last chapter gives a conclusion on the findings of the thesis.

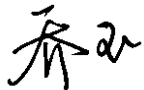
This thesis differs from the previous studies by applying the Theme theory of functional grammar to the analysis of the parables. It focuses on the opening words, where the thematic element exists, in order to find out the topic of the parables. It is found that typical Theme of a parable's opening sentence is simple and unmarked Theme. Matthew tends to put given information within the paragraph Theme while Luke's paragraph Theme carries new information. Each of the two Gospel writers has his specific concern in recording a parable. The analysis of the opening words is helpful to understand the focus of the parable.

Key words: parable, thematic structure, opening words, the Gospels

学位论文原创性声明

本人所提交的学位论文《比较分析〈马太福音〉和〈路加福音〉中比喻起始句的主位结构》(A Comparative Analysis of the Thematic Structure of Parable Openings in the Gospel of Matthew and Luke), 是在导师的指导下, 独立进行研究工作所取得的原创性成果。除文中已经注明引用的内容外, 本论文不包含任何其他个人或集体已经发表或撰写过的研究成果。对本文的研究做出重要贡献的个人和集体, 均已在文中标明。

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2007年4月2日

学位论文原创性确认书

学生 乔玉 所提交的学位论文《比较分析〈马太福音〉和〈路加福音〉中比喻起始句的主位结构》(A Comparative Analysis of the Thematic Structure of Parable Openings in the Gospel of Matthew and Luke), 是在本人的指导下, 由其独立进行研究工作所取得的原创性成果。除文中已经注明引用的内容外, 该论文不包含任何其他个人或集体已经发表或撰写过的研究成果。

指导教师(签名):

年 月 日

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Chapter 1. Introduction

In the entire realm of literature there is no book so rich in its parabolic material as the Bible. The record of parable is one of the most significant features of the New Testament. Three of the four Gospels record parables, the most characteristic message of Jesus Christ, with large words. (John doesn't record any parable in his Gospel.) Matthew, Mark and Luke are called Synoptic Gospels, ("syn" means "together with"; "optic" means "seeing". Thus the word means "seeing together") because they are noticeably similar while John is quite different. The three Gospels agree extensively in language, in the material they include, and in the order in which the events and sayings from life of Christ are recorded (NIV 1995, 1431). The record of parables proves this observation. Many parables are found in the first three Gospels but none in John. So the Synoptic Gospels, especially Matthew and Luke, are the major data of this article, for there is no parable in John and few in Mark.

1.1 The definition of parable

While Jesus contributes his unique parables to the biblical literature and makes this method of teaching to its highest level, he is not the inventor of this form. In the age of the New Testament, parable was a common and popular method of instruction among the people of the East. As Dr. Salmond (1894, 393) mentioned in his handbook *The Parables of Our Lord*, parable was "a special attraction for the peoples of the East, with whom the imagination is quicker and more active than the logical faculty. The great family of nations known as Semitic, to which the Hebrews...and other remarkable races belong, has shown a particular genius and liking for it." So it is obvious that both the term itself and its reference has existed and been accepted for long.

1.1.1 The definition of parable in general

Although the term "parable" is widely used in both the Old Testament and

the New Testament, it is defined nowhere. Its meaning is taken for granted. Actually, it is used flexibly and hard to define. It also shows some differences when used in the Old and the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for “parable” is “Māshāl”, which basically means “to be like”. The use of this word in the Old Testament covers several forms of figurative speech and the translations into English are various. However, the application of this word in the New Testament is more specific. In the original Greek New Testament, there are two Greek words rendered by one English term “parable”. A more common one is “parabolē”, occurring 45 times in the Synoptic Gospels. From lexical point of view, this word is combined by two roots: “para”, which means “beside”, and “ballo”, which means “to throw” or “to cast”. It can be literally understood by placing of one thing by the side of another. So the meaning of the roots suggests the purpose of comparison for likeness or different. It is translated into different English words. Take the King James Version for an example; the word “parabolē” is translated into four words. They are “comparison” (once, Mark 4:30); “figure” (twice, Hebrews 9:9; 11:9); “proverb” (once, Luke 4:3) and, forty-six times, “parable”. Another Greek word which is translated into “parable” is “paroimia”, meaning “a way side saying”. It is also translated into “proverb”. The word is almost particular to John, who uses it four times.

1.1.2 The definition of parable in the New Testament

The above words discuss the meaning and usage of “parable” in a general sense. However, this article is focused on the parables in the New Testament, or more specifically, in the Gospels. So it is necessary to give a further explanation of this word in the New Testament. Parable is given a newness of spirit in the New Testament. As used in the Gospels, the “parable” not only denotes metaphors, analogies, and enigmatic statements, but also short illustrative narratives. The parables of Jesus that are recorded in the Synoptic Gospels are superb in their talent, conciseness, beauty and appeal. Although Jesus didn’t create the parabolic type of teaching, he certainly endowed it with highly

originality and gave it a deeper spiritual import and dimensions hitherto unknown. The word itself acquired its specific meaning through the lips of Christ (Lockyer 1988, 126). The application of this word is also different from that in the Old Testament and other places. First, it is applied to proverbial sayings, just like a story, as in Luke 14:7: "And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any [man] to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room...For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." This is the most common usage in the three Gospels. Second, the word is used for comparison or illustrates statements that have no narrative in them. For instance, in Luke 6: 39: "And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?" Another example is more evident in this sense: Matthew 24:32: "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh." At last, the word is used to refer to Jesus' words and teaching that reveal the meaning directly. This usage differs from the first two. The evidence can be found at Mark 7: 14-23. The application of the word shows obviously that the word "parable" in the New Testament is closely combined with the teaching of Jesus. It is not a figure of speech in general way but specifically refers to the story told by Jesus preaching heavenly message.

Despite of the above discussion of the definition and application of the word "parable", the criterion of defining "parable" is still in discussion. Besides, there are a few doubtful cases in each Gospel. Some cases are accepted as parables by certain scholars and rejected by others. So the parables analyzed in this article are picked from those with general acceptance. And it is necessary to make an announcement that the counting of the number of parables is, unavoidably, without an exact standard.

1.2 An introduction to Thematic Analysis

1.2.1 Definition of Theme

The term “Theme” was first proposed by Prague school linguist Mathesius (1942). He found that the element in the first position of a sentence have a special function. It is “the starting point of the utterance”. He called it “Theme” and the rest part of the sentence “Rheme”. These two terms were accepted by M. A. K. Halliday of Functional Grammar. In his *Introducing Functional Grammar*, Halliday defined Theme as “the element which serves as the point of departure of the message, it is that with which the clause is concerned.” (Halliday 1994, 37). He further argued that Theme is not always equivalent to the topic. It can be divided in to textual Theme, interpersonal Theme and Topical theme. Topical theme is equivalent to the topic in a topic-comment analysis. As a general guide, the theme can be identified as that element which comes in the first position in the clause. The function of Theme is to “organize the clause as a message” (Halliday 1994, 38).

1.2.2 Classification of Theme

Halliday devided Theme into three major types: simple Theme, multiple Theme and Clausal Theme. The Theme is not always a nominal group. It may also be an adverbial group or prepositional group. Such as the prepositional group in the sentence “with sobs and tears he sorted out those of the largest size.” There are two assumptions made by Halliday: that the Theme of a clause consists of just one structural element and that that element is represented by just one unit, one nominal group, adverbial group or preposition phrase. An element of clause structure may be represented by a complex of two or more group or phrases. Such a group or phrase complex functions as a Theme in the normal way (Halliday 1994, 40). That means a simple Theme may include more than one group or phrase, which forms a single constituent in the structure of the clause. For example, the Theme in “the Walrus and the Carpenter were walking close at hand” is “the Walrus and the Carpenter”, which is a phrase complex.

According to Halliday (1994), some elements do not fill the Theme position by themselves, such as conjunctions and relatives. They occur thematically if they occur at all. When they do not exhaust the thematic

potential of the clause, the next element in the clause is also part of the Theme, thus we get multiple Theme. Halliday made it clear that the Theme “always includes one and only one experiential element” which is called “topical Theme”, because it functions like the topic in a topic-comment analysis. The topical Theme may be preceded by elements which are textual and/or interpersonal in function. They are called textual Theme and interpersonal Theme. The typical ordering of these three elements are textual \sim interpersonal \sim experiential. The topical Theme is the end of the Theme part.

The Thematic organization appears both above and below the clause. Halliday didn't give a clear definition about the clausal Theme. But Thompson (1996) gave some illustration on identifying the Theme in a clause complex. He suggested that when a dependent clause precedes the clause on which it depends, the dependent clause itself should be the Theme of the whole clause complex. When the dominant clause comes first, the Theme of that clause functions as Theme for the whole clause complex, including the dependent clause.

1.2.3 Theme and Mood

According to Halliday, the element chosen to be the Theme depends on the choice of mood. Mood consists of two parts: the Subject, which is a nominal group and the Finite operator, which is part of a verbal group. A clause that has a thematic structure is either indicative or imperative in mood. Indicative clause can be further divided into declarative and interrogative. The typical Theme in a declarative clause is equivalent to subject. It is the unmarked Theme. A Theme that is something other than the subject is marked Theme. A typical example of marked Theme in declarative clause is adverbial group. Complement is the least element to be the Theme in a declarative clause. Interrogative clause consists of polar interrogative and content interrogative. In a polar interrogative, the element that functions as Theme is the element that embodies the expression of polarity, namely the finite verbal operator. It is put before the subject. The Theme includes the finite verb and also the subject. In a WH-interrogative, the Theme is constituted by the WH-element. It is easy to get that in the

interrogative clause there is a strong tendency for speaker to choose the unmarked form.

Halliday (1994) indicated that the basic message of an imperative clause is “I want you/us to do something. It is the verb that is in front of the clause. The function of the verb in the mood structure is that of predicator. The predicator is the typical Theme in imperative clause. In negative imperatives, the principle is the same as with polar interrogatives. The unmarked Theme is “don’t” plus the following element. The imperative is the only type of clause in which the Predicator is found as Theme.

Each type of the clause has its typical element chosen as Theme. The typical Theme of declarative clause is the nominal group functioning as subject; the one in yes/no interrogative is finite operator plus subject. WH-element is the unmarked Theme of content interrogative. Imperative clause has the predicator as its typical Theme. In the following part of the thesis, the writer will discuss the Theme structure of the parable’s opening sentence by dividing them in to different types according to their mood.

1.2.4 Theme and information

The Prague School thinks that the text is composed by the information unit. The development of text is realized by the interaction of given information and new information. Given information is something which the speaker assumes the hearer knows about already, while new information is something the hearer doesn’t know by the time of the communication. Halliday agrees that “there is a close semantic relationship between information structure and thematic structure” but they are not the same thing. Theme+Rheme is speaker-oriented while Given+New is listener-oriented (Halliday, 1994). A text should always contain both given information and new information. Given information provides the background where the text develops and new information contains the message the speaker tries to convey. Generally the given information is within the Theme and new information in the Rheme. But in some situation the new information is put within the Theme.

Halliday (1994) further indicated that generally the focus is at the end of information unit, it gives a kind of diminuendo-crescendo movement to the typical movement to the typical English clause: the downward movement from initial thematic prominence being caught up in the upward movement to the final informational prominence. As the clause moves away from the first peak, it moves towards the second; and this impacts a small scale period or wave like movement to the discourse.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 The previous studies on parable

Modern research on the parables essentially began with Adolph Jülicher's first edition of *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu* in 1886. Although his categories have been superseded, many of his discussion still influence current debates. For example, Jülicher (1886) argued that the Gospel authors obscured the parabolic message of Jesus with an overgrowth of allegory, descriptive supplementation and interpretive application. According to Jülicher, there are "pristine parables" or "original parables" behind the ones recorded in the Gospels. This understanding is intimately connected to Jülicher's concept of the form and nature of parables and the meanings intended by the parables. Jülicher believed that parables are similes (comparisons), not metaphors.

Jülicher's theory was seriously challenged by C. H. Dodd. Dodd's famous expression "realized eschatology" in his book *The Parable of the Kingdom* became the starting point for a reappraisal of the parables. He saw the context of the parables to be Jesus' preaching of the kingdom that was being realized in and through his ministry. He also examined the parables on two levels: that of the ministry of Jesus and that of the early Church. At his time, the studies of the parable were mainly connected with the historical facts and were in sacred field.

A seismic shift in parable study began in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s initiated by what came to be known as the American School. In many years, this shift was a further development of historical-critical approach, but it also represented a significant change in orientation and methodology. Parable study in this period saw parables more as literary works of arts. G. V. Jones was one of the pioneers of this approach. His study of the parable as art form was a significant new venture in parabolic interpretation. In his book *The Art and Truth of the Parables* (1964), he argued that parables were fashioned out of the raw material of human life by a creative imagination. As a

work of art, parable is not just a propositional statement about how one should behave or how God acts, but sets forth the truth about God and man regardless time or environment. The artistic nature of the parables allows for an application beyond the historical situation. Another forefront scholar in this period is Amos Wilder. Wilder situated his study of the parables in the context of his larger vision concerning the nature of language in general and the language of the New Testament in particular. His chapter on the parables in his book *The Language of the Gospel* is only eighteen pages long, but it established the parameters for discussions for years to come. He begins by disagreeing with the opinion that the synoptic parables are merely a colorful means of illustration. Instead, there is something in the nature of the Gospel that evoked this rhetoric.

The fully development of the literary approach came when John Dominic Crossan pulled together the insights of his predecessors and further studied their work with innovative insights from contemporary literary criticism. Crossan and other scholars in this period also represent an important turning point: they return the parables to the Gospel context but now examine how they function as narratives within larger narratives. The distinction Crossan makes between parable and allegory is crucial for his thesis. For Crossan, parables are unlike allegory, metaphoric language. They can not be paraphrased in conceptual term.

Biblical scholars, translators and linguists never stopped their pursuit on the parables. At the end of the last century and the beginning of the new century, parabolic study comes to an unprecedented prosperous era. The recent studies cover various aspects including identifying, classifying and interpreting of parables. *The Parables of Jesus: a commentary* written by Arland J. Hultgren provided a comprehensive study of each of the thirty-eight parables of Jesus; Hultgren offers a fresh translation of the text along with interpretive notes and commentary on the parable's meaning and significance for readers today. Some studies focus on the theory and methodology. *What Are They Saying about the Parables* by David B. Gowler gave a concise and thorough survey of current scholarly thinking on Jesus' parables. Gowler discussed not only the parabolic

study of different period but also in different context such as Jewish context, Hellenistic context and social context. In spite of the Variety, the current studies seem more specific. The work as *All the Parables of the Bible* by Herbert Lockyer in 1963 is rarely seen now. They tend to study the parables in each Synoptic Gospel and make the study concise. The examples are Jan Lambrecht's *Out of the Treasure: the parables in the Gospel of Matthew* and Kenneth Ewing Bailey's *Poet and peasant; and Through peasant eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke*. These two books specifically discussed every parable in Matthew and Luke, both giving a new idea in interpreting the parables of the two Gospels. Lambrecht picked up eleven parables from Matthew and provided a precise study on each of them. Each parable composes a chapter. Lambrecht studied the parables from the aspects of the translations of different versions, the origin and source, the language structure and finally concludes a Matthean character on interpreting parables. The combined edition of Kenneth Bailey's two acclaimed studies of the parables in Luke's Gospel looks anew at the parables from the perspective of the Oriental culture, an approach that draws out important meanings overlooked by modern readers. This also shows another feature of the recent study, that is the concern of the needs of ordinary readers. One example is the book *Studying the Parables of Jesus* written by Peter Rhea Jones. Jones helps readers explore many of the parables, and brought his study into dialogue with wider scholarship and current opinion.

2.2 The previous studies on thematic analysis

It is generally agreed that the notion Theme and Rheme were first proposed by Mathesius, the founder of Prague School. He classified the starting point of the utterance and the following elements consisting of what the speaker states about as Theme and Rheme. He proposed this notion in order to study the function of different elements of a clause in communication. Mathesius suggested that the main function of Theme was to start a topic. He also made classification of given information and new information. Generally Theme

contains given information while Rheme contains new information. But when the Theme is not the subject but other element, the Theme may contain new information. Since then, the thematic analysis was applied to various aspects.

Under the influence of Prague School, Halliday and his functional grammar accepted and developed the Theme theory. He also agreed that the Theme is the point of departure of the message. He proposed that there were three metafunctions of the clause. The Theme and Rheme analysis serves textual function. He further divided Theme in to simple Theme, multiple Theme and clausal Theme. The multiple Theme composes interpersonal, textual and topical Theme in terms of their function.

There are many other linguists who are also interest in thematic analysis. For example, Firbas(1964) made his own distribution in *On Defining the Theme in Functional Sentence Perspective*. He conformed that the Theme didn't always contain given information. Unmarked Theme may also carry new information. He also proposed "communicative dynamism", suggesting that the constituent carrying the new information has more effect on communicative development than the constituent carrying given information.

Danes (1974) made his contribution to this field by putting forward the notion of "thematic progression" to refer to the complex relation between the Themes. He paid more attention on the organization of information in the whole text. He suggested that there were five types of thematic progression: simple linear, constant Theme, derived Theme, split Rheme and spring Theme.

Fries (1994) made a further study on the thematic choice and text type. He noticed that the choice of the Theme was not as free as it seems to. Based on plenty of data analysis, he found that the thematic choice had close relationship with the text type. A certain type of text had its correlating thematic pattern. Many other linguists proved this suggestion by analyzing various types of text. For example, McCarthy and Carter (1994) analyzed a mixed-genre advertisement and made a comparison on the thematic choice of spoken and written text. Berry (1995) made a thematic analysis on the travel information

writings. He found that guide book and travel brochure belong to different genres. The thematisation of informational element determines guide book writings.

Chinese linguists also made great contributions on the thematic analysis. Huang Guowen (1988) made a clear introduction of the function of thematic analysis in text analysis in his book *An Introduction to Text Analysis*. He said that Theme is the basis element in text construction. The development of a text can be seen as the arrangement of Themes. He thought that the analysis of thematic pattern was meaningful in understanding the intention of the speaker. Xu Shenghuan(1982) and Huang Yan (1985) developed Danes' thematic progression and made their own patterns. Xu Shenghuan divided thematic progression into four patterns and Huang Yan made it seven patterns.

The Thematic analysis has been applied to various types of text. Yu Jianping (2002) made a TP analysis on the scientific and technical text. She found that the thematic progression in technical text did not follow a single type but a complex of several types. Wang Xiuhong(2005) studied the thematic structure in English advertisement. She found that advertisement text followed a certain principle in thematic arrangement. It aimed to influence the cognition of the consumer and persuade them to buy the product. The thematic progression was determined by this purpose.

2.3 The research of this thesis

The studies on parable have proved to be creative and dynamic than ever before. The vast radiation of study makes few aspects untouched. All the studies seem to center around one question: how to interpret the parables correctly. However, the scholars like to discuss this question from a literary point of view, the rhetorical study of parables remains the focus of parabolic study for a long time. Few people study the parable from linguistic point of view.

The thematic analysis has been applied to various types of texts. It is proved to be useful in understanding the underlying structure and the information organization of the text. However, this theory has rarely been used

in the interpretation of parables. The writer thinks the thematic analysis of the parable is helpful to get the real message it tries to convey.

This thesis tries to apply the Theme theory of functional grammar to the interpretation of parable. It focuses on the opening sentence other than the whole text. The theme of the first sentence is the departure point of the whole paragraph. It is called paragraph Theme. As the function of the Theme in a clause is to start the message of that clause, the function of paragraph theme is to start the whole paragraph. The identification of the theme in the first sentence is helpful to make clear how the writer intends to start a parable.

Most of parables are found in two Gospels, Matthew and Luke. John doesn't contain any parable and Mark contains only six, five of which are shared with Matthew and Luke. The parables in the Mark is two few to show any significance. So the Gospel of Matthew and Luke are the subjects of this thesis. Is there any thematic feature of the parable's opening? Do the two Gospel authors open the parable in the same way or do they have any particular feature? This thesis aims to answer these questions by examining the thematic structure of the openings in each Gospel.

Chapter 3. The Analysis of Matthew's Parable

Openings

3.1 The general description of parables in Matthew

From the second century onwards, Matthew has been the most often quoted of all the Gospels. This popularity is to some extent won by his particular way of recording parables. Different from Mark, who concentrates on the authority of Jesus in his teaching without giving very much of actual information, Matthew provides detailed and readable parables which are organized in a clear and coherent way.

3.1.1 Sources

The source of the material in Matthew can be divided into three types. A large amount of Matthew's material is shared with Mark and Luke. This is called "triple tradition". Another part of material is shared with Luke only, called "double tradition". The rest part is particular to Matthew. Many biblical scholars believe that both Matthew and Luke copy from Mark to a great extent. As Lambrecht (1992) said in his book *Out of the Treasure*, "most probably Matthew was not acquainted with Luke's Gospel or Luke with the Gospel of Matthew. But these two authors knew Mark's Gospel". A mathematical comparison in NIV shows that 91 percent of Mark's Gospel is contained in Matthew, while 53 percent is found in Luke. This standpoint is accepted by most of people. However, there are some other scholars believe all of the three depend on an earlier written version of Gospels, or even several slightly different versions. In spite of the dispute, a clear fact is that a large part of materials of Matthew can be also found in Mark or Luke.

Speaking of parables, Matthew possesses twenty parables, which can be divided into two groups by their sources. The first one is, according to Lambrecht, the parables copied from Mark's Gospel. Five parables of Matthew are quite similar with Mark's, who has only six at all. Besides, Mark was the

first of the three Gospels to be written, so it is most likely that Matthew borrowed some of his parables from Mark. However, this is not the major composing of Matthew's parable. In addition to this way, Matthew also possess a second source, the so-called "Quelle" (German for source), abbreviated to Q-source, which is a kind of hypothetical document, or oral tradition. Both Matthew and Luke rely greatly on a collection of the sayings. This also results in the similarity of Matthew and Luke.

3.1.2 Arrangement

The placement that Matthew has given to his parables is somewhat surprising. Only a few can be found in the first twelve chapters of his Gospel and many parables appear together. Chapter thirteen is special in its containing of a cluster of parables, about seven. Four of which belong to Matthew's particular ones, which appear neither in Mark or Luke. Because of this peculiarity, chapter thirteen is often called "chapter of parables". Years ago, Jack Kingsburg noticed that the parables bunched in chapter thirteen were, in effect, a "hinge". (1969, 130-137). This chapter attracts most interest of parabolic studies. With the prelude of parables at chapter twelve which record Jesus' parable of the empty house at the end of this chapter, chapter thirteen begins with parables told to the crowds. But the Israel people reject his teaching, so in the middle of this chapter, Jesus turns away from recalcitrant Israel and begins to instruct his disciples privately. He tells his "new Israel" parables full of promise. They are given images of the kingdom of heaven, which become the major topic of chapter thirteen.

The first cluster of parables appears before chapter twelve, which contains three parables. Then comes chapter thirteen, which provides us with seven parables. At chapter eighteen to chapter twenty-three parables can be found. Another three are joined in chapter twenty-one and twenty-two. Finally, there are four parables in the latter part of the book, chapter twenty-four and twenty-five. In the first half of the Gospel, most of the parables are brief similes or images. There are many such images in the Sermon on the Mount (chapter

five); most of them seem to have been drawn from Q-source. The first two Parables at the beginning of chapter thirteen (the Sower and Mustard Seed) are borrowed from Mark. Then in the latter part Matthew draws on his own special source. In chapters twenty and twenty-one, there are three “vineyard parables”. In chapter twenty-four and twenty-five, there are three “judgment parables”. The appearance of cluster of parables is one of the significant characters of Matthean discourse.

3.1.3 Features

An attractive and readable feature of Matthew is the clear organization of his Gospel. Each of the blocks is treated in a coherent and organized way. Matthew likes to give a principle, followed by examples or applications. This can be seen clearly in the Sermon on the Mount. Another significant feature of Matthew is the using of pairs, the two elements either reinforcing or contrasting with each other. Chapter thirteen is distinct evidence. For example, after the parable of the Sower, Matthew adds another seed parable, namely Wheat and Tares, which is not appeared in either Mark or Luke. This parable is very much similar with the Sower in both structure and content. They both tell the parables first and then give explanations; both express the message of different situations in belief. To another parable, Mustard Seed, there is also an added parable with similar lesson, the Yeast. Both talk about the growth of faith. Then follows a pairs of parables on the cherishing of heavenly thing, namely the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl. This pair is Matthew’s particular parables. Finally the Net balances the Wheat and Tares, with the same lesson. Beyond chapter thirteen, there is another group of paired parables in the later part of the book. One pair is about lord and servant. They are Workers in the Vineyard and Unmerciful Servant. Another one is Watchful Servant and Ten Virgins, which is about keeping watch in waiting for the coming of the Christ. Half of the paired parables belong to Matthew’s particular parables, so this is one of the most significant features of the parables in Matthew.

Another distinguish feature of Matthean parables is its openings. The rest

part of this chapter will give a discussion on this point.

3.2 Classification of Matthew's parable openings according to the mood

Matthew's parable contains twenty parables: five shared with Mark and Luke, seven shared only with Luke, and eight peculiar to itself. Matthew's parable openings are very clear and readable. Matthew follows limited types of opening a parable, and the following section will classify them according to the mood.

3.2.1 Group one Declaratives as opening sentence

(1) Eleven out of twenty parables are started in the same way with exactly same words: "the kingdom of heaven is like (unto)..." This is so peculiar that can not be found in any other part of the whole Bible. Seven of these eleven occurrences are in the parables peculiar to Matthew. The structure of the opening of these parables can be further examined in the following ways:

(i) The kingdom of heaven is like + a man (or equivalent) + attributive clause

For example, in 13:24 the parable begins like this: "The kingdom of heaven is like (unto) a man which (who) sowed good seed in his field..." Another example is found in 20: 1-16: "the kingdom of heaven is like (unto) a man that is a householder, which (who) went out early in the morning to hire laborers..." some cases with equivalent element are also put in this group, as in 25:1-13: "shall the kingdom of heaven be likened (unto) ten virgins, which (who) took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom." And some has a modifier before the noun, as in 22:1-10: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which (who) made a marriage for his son..."

(ii) The kingdom of heaven is like + something + attributive clause

This subgroup possesses three examples. One is found in 13:47, 48: "the kingdom of heaven is like (unto) a net, that (which) was cast into the sea and gathered of every kind..." another one is the parable of Leaven: "The kingdom of heaven is like (unto) leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." (13:33) the last one is from the three

tradition parables, the parable of mustard seed: “The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field...” it is the only “kingdom parable” of the “three tradition” parables.

(iii) The kingdom of heaven + noun + participle

This structure is found in three parables. First one is the parable of treasure: “the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field...” (13:44). the second one is rightly next to the first one: “the kingdom of heaven is like (unto) a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls...” the third one is the parable of talent, which is similar with the second one.

(2) This subgroup consist five parables that opens in a similar way. The parables in this group start with “a man” or equivalences, a sower, a householder, or negative equivalent “no man”. The first example is the parable of “Sower and Seed” in 13:3-9: “a sower went forth to sow...” it is a famous parable shared by all the three Synoptic Gospels. The second one is the only parable that belongs to Matthew’s peculiar parables but doesn’t open with “the kingdom of heaven”. It is called the parable of Two Sons: “A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first...And he came to the second...” this parable consist two parts, the first part is a narrative which tells the story; the second part is a revelation of the meaning of the parable. Another parable in this group opens in a negative way with the word “no man”, which can be seen as the negative equivalent of “a man”, as in 9:16-17: “No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.” There are actually two parables in this discourse, which have the same structure. Since the first word is “no man”, that is to say, a person who does not exist. So the focus naturally falls on the next element which is the verb “put”. In this case the focus would appear to be on the event rather than on the participants. A relatively ambiguous case in this group is the parable of “Two Houses”. The parable opens with a pronoun

“whosoever”, which can be understood as “a man who”. So the opening can be transferred into “a man who heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, will be likened unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock...” only one of the parables in this group is Matthew’s unique material. This group shows more diverse in opening parables than the first group.

(3) The other example of this group is called “the Wicked Tenants”. It starts with existential sentence: “There was a certain householder, which (who) ...” this structure is frequently used in Luke’s parables, but not in Matthew. The topic is clearly suggested in the opening sentence that the householder is in focus. This is backed up by the recurrence of the householder at the end of the narrative part and the whole parable: “What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do...This was the Lord's doing...” and the real point is not the bad behavior of the wicked tenants but the lord’s reaction and punishment towards them. So the name of this parable should be “the Lords Reaction”.

(4) The last parable in this group opens with existential sentence “there is...” there are some problems and disputes in thematic interpretation of such structure. Since this parable is shared with Luke, the writer will leave this question to the next chapter, because there are more examples provided.

3.2.2 Group two Interrogative as opening sentence

Different from the first group, the parables in this group start with questions.

One is the parable in 24:45-51: “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?” this is not a real question, because it needs no answer. And this sentence can be transformed into such a statement: “a faithful and wise servant has been made ruler over his lord’s household...” the starting point is the faithful servant. And in the second part of this parable, another servant is called out to be compared with the first one: “But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, ‘My lord delayeth his coming...’ here the “evil servant” echoes the “faithful and wise servant”, and the parable also talks about his ending in order

to compare with the first one's. So this parable uses a parallel structure to make a comparison.

The second parable starting with a question is named "Children in the Market Place". It starts as "But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows..." this question immediately answered by the speaker himself. The use of the question to open a parable is not because the speaker needs to know the answer but for calling the audience's involvement.

3.2.3 Group Three Imperative as opening sentence

The only parable opens with imperative is the parable of Fig Tree. In that parable the recognition of topic in the opening words is very clear. Actually, the topic of this parable is given by the speaker himself in the very beginning: "Now learn a parable of the fig tree..." this one is different from the "Fig Tree" in Luke's Gospel, although the topic is the same.

It is obvious that the declarative sentence is most frequently used by Matthew to start a parable. There are four elements that Matthew uses most in opening parables. They are "like" (thirteen times), "man" or equivalent (twelve times), "the kingdom of heaven" (eleven times), and "who/which" (eleven times). Seven of twenty parables have all four elements. And five of these seven belongs to the eight parables peculiar to Matthew. However, this percentage shrinks a lot in the cases that shared with the other two Gospels. Two of the seven parables Matthew shares with Luke have four elements. And of the five parables Matthew shares with both Mark and Luke only one have all four elements. Besides, the parables peculiar to Matthew tend to show distinctive difference from those of shared ones. The typical Matthew parables opening can be summed up into this formula: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who..." the more a parable tends to be distinctive of Matthew, the more it tends to conform the above formula.

3.3 Thematic structure of Matthew's parable openings

According to Halliday, the Theme is "the element which serves as the point

of departure of the message; it is that with which the clause is concerned.” (Halliday, 1994). The “topic sentence” of a paragraph is “nothing other than its Theme”. The theme of the first clause or clause complex is paragraph theme. So the following thematic analysis of the opening words will help us to define the theme of each parable. Since the parables have been classified into different groups according to their openings, the analysis will follow these groups and pick up one or two parables as examples to make interpretation.

3.3.1 The Theme of Group one

(1) Nominal group “the kingdom of heaven”

The parables in this group begin with a clause complex. Thompson (1996) suggests that when the dominant clause comes first, the Theme of that clause functions as Theme for the whole clause complex, including the dependent clause. Three parables will be picked up from each subgroup in order to make an interpretation.

a. 13:24

The kingdom of heaven	is like a man who sowed good seeds in his field.
Theme	Rheme

There is an embedded clause (a clause functioning inside the structure of a nominal group) which begins with WH-element in this clause complex. In such case, WH-element constitutes the topical theme of the dependent clause, because it “also has a function in the transitivity structure of the clause” (Halliday, 1994). It can be further analyzed as shown in the following table:

[a man]

who	sowed good seeds in his field.
Theme	Rheme

b. 13: 33

The kingdom of	is like leaven which a woman took and hid in
----------------	--

heaven	three measures of meal till the whole was leavened.
Theme	Rheme

The embedded clause can be further analyzed as

[leaven]

which	a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened.
Theme	Rheme

c. 13:44

The kingdom of heaven	is like treasure hid in a field
Theme	Rheme

As shows above, the theme of the parables of the first group is the kingdom of heaven. Since eleven out of the twenty parables have the same theme, the kingdom of heaven can be said the major theme of Matthew's parable. The WH-element can be the sub- theme of the sentence. However, because their down-ranking, "the fact that they do not function as constituents of a sentence" (Halliday,1994), their thematic contribution to the discourse can be ignored.

The Theme carries the given information. Although "the kingdom of heaven" appears in the first place in the parable, it is not new to the audience. It is a generally known by the people at that time. The new information is carried by the Rheme part, which is the focus of this sentence. The Theme of the embedded clause turns to be the center of the new information. The sentences in this group are all relational process. The kingdom of heaven is describe by something that is concrete, such as leaven, treasure, and so on.

(2) Nominal group "a man" or equivalent

The parables of this group are more like narratives. The theme of the first clause or clause complex remains the theme of the whole paragraph. For

example, in the parable of Sower and Seed, the first clause is “A sower went forth to sow”. here “A sower is certainly the theme. And it should be the topic of the parable. However, some one argues that the seed should also be the topic because it turns to be the theme of the following part of the parable. Let’s look at the following part: “And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up; some (seeds) fell upon stony places, where...; some (seeds) fell among thorns...; but other fell into good ground...” the WH-element as a whole is the theme of the whole clause complex. The structure can be seen clearly in the following table:

And when	he	sowed	some seeds	fell by the way side...
Theme ₁			Rheme ₁	
structural	topical			
Theme ₂		Rheme ₂	Theme ₃	Rheme ₃

As shown above, the topical theme of the whole clause complex is “he”, which refers to the sower in the first clause. So the theme is still the sower rather than the seeds. The recent interpretation of this parable tends to understand the parable as an encouragement to the evangelists. In the explanation of the parable at the latter part of the same chapter, the writer makes clear that the seeds symbolize the good news; the sower is the one who preaches good news. And the grounds are the people who are preached with the good news. The seeds fall on the different grounds and make different results. That means some people may listen and accept the good news while some may not. This is not controlled by the sower. But the most important is that there is some one to sow. it makes sense that the writer puts the sower in the thematic position.

This group also includes a parable which is the only parable that belongs to

Matthew's peculiar parables but doesn't open with "the kingdom of heaven". The title of this parable is "the Two Sons". But According to the theme of this parable, this title is not apt. The narrative part of the parable starts like this: "A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first...And he came to the second..." the Theme of the first sentence is clearly "a certain man". And it remains the Theme of the following sentences. So this parable is actually talking about the father instead of the two sons. However, in the last sentence there is an obvious shift of the Theme. At the end of the narrative part of the parable, Jesus calls the audience's attention by asking a question: "Whether of them twain did the will of his father?" with WH-interrogatives, the WH-group itself represents the missing information that the other person is asked to provide, it is the unmarked Theme when appearing at the first position. So the theme turns from the father to the sons. It seems incoherent with the preceding part because of the violation of the Theme. However, the second part of this parable may provide a solution for this problem. The second part is an explanation and comment of the parable. Jesus makes a comparison of the publican and Israel people, which are imaged by the two sons. The real point is to criticize the Israel people who do not repent. So the topic of the second part is clearly the two sons. And the last sentence of the first part can be seen the transitional sentence connecting the first part and the second part.

(3) Multiple Theme and clausal Theme

There is one more parable should be noticed. This is called the parable of "Two Houses": "Therefore whosoever hears these sayings of mine and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock...And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand..."

The Theme structure in this sentence is much more complex. First, the WH-relative is the clausal Theme of the clause complex. Second, there are textual Theme and topical Theme inside the Theme part.

Therefore	whosoever	hears these sayings...	I	will liken him unto a wise man...
Theme ₁			Rheme ₁	
textual	topical			
Theme ₂		Rheme ₂	Theme ₃	Rheme ₃

The textual Theme reveals the connection to the previous part of the text. In this sentence, the Theme contains less information than the Rheme. The focus falls on how the speaker describes the man who listens to him.

3.3.2 Theme of group two

The two parables in this group start with WH-interrogatives. The Theme of this kind of sentence is constituted solely by the WH-element which represents the “missing information” that the question searches for. The missing information can be any part of the message. As in the first example, the WH-element functions as complement.

11:16-19 (“Children in the Market Place”)

Whereunto	shall I liken this generation?
Theme	Rheme

The missing information searched in this question is the manner of the current generation. And it is answered immediately in the following sentence:

It	is like children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows.
Theme	Rheme

The Theme “it” refers to the generation in preceding sentence. So this parable talks the manner of the generation, which is a better name for this

parable.

The second parable in this group consist two parts. The first part starts with a question that requires no answer. It is the parable of “Good and Bad Servant” in 24:45: “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?” the Theme in this sentence is the word “who” which functions as the subject. A fact should be noticed that this question is not searching for which one is the faithful servant, because there’s no answer provided. It is asked by the speaker just for introducing the servant into the speech. The theme also carries given information and the focus is on the Rheme.

Although the two parables both open with interrogatives, their thematic structures are different. The first one is a multiple Theme. The second one is a simple Theme.

a.

But	whereunto	shall I liken this generation?
textual	topical	Rheme
Theme		

b.

Who	then is a faithful and wise servant...
Theme	Rheme

3.3.3 Theme of group three

The first parable in this group is given a name by the speaker, “the parable of a fig tree”. The sentence is an imperative with the verb as the Theme.

Now	learn	a parable of a fig tree.
textual	topical	Rheme
Theme		

The basis message of this sentence is “ I want you to listen”. It is effective to call the audience’s attention.

3.4 Summery

It is very clear that the major theme of Matthew's parables is the kingdom of heaven, which composes eleven parables out of twenty. The kingdom of heaven is compared to eleven different figures, such as pearl, treasure, mustard seed, and so on. These figures express different aspects of the kingdom. For example, the pearl and treasure symbolize the invaluableeness of heaven; the mustard seed symbolize that although the kingdom seems to have an insignificant beginning, it will eventually spread throughout the world; the weeds symbolize the wicked will be separated from the righteous in heaven. The "kingdom parables" composes most of Matthew's unique materials, but rarely appear in the other ones shared with the other Synoptic Gospels. In other parables, the theme is shifted from kingdom to the people, such as sower, householder, builder, etc. The secret of heaven is hinted in the stories of those people. Some parables call the audiences' attention by starting with a question, and the missing information of the question is the theme of the parable. Generally, the themes of parables are revealed in the opening sentences, or more specifically, in the opening words or phrases. Most of parables follow the same theme in their following sentence. So the opening words or phrases are very important in understanding the real meaning of the parable. Some titles of the parables are not apt because they don't reflect the real theme of the parables. For example, the parable at 7:24-27 is usually called "Two House", but the theme is the builders. The thematic analysis provides a way to solve this problem.

Chapter 4. The Analysis of Luke's Parable Openings

4.1 An overview on Luke's parable

Each Gospel has a slightly different manner in presenting the life and teaching of Jesus. Luke, the only native Greek speaker in the Gospel writers, has his unique way in recording these. A notable feature of Luke's Gospel is his skillful and polished language. Well educated in Greek culture, Luke has outstanding command of the Greek language. His vocabulary is extensive and rich, at the same time universal. His language seems to reveal geographical and culture sensitivity, in that it varies with particular land or people being described. Besides, it is generally agreed that Luke is a master stylist. In Luke's Gospel, the parables of Jesus are reconstructed with Luke's particular style.

Although Luke acknowledges that many others had written of Jesus' life (1:1), he does not indicate that he relied on these records for his own writing. He used personal investigation, based on testimony from "eyewitnesses and servants of the word" (1:2), including the preaching and oral accounts of the apostles. Like Matthew, Luke also copies a large amount of material from Mark. Comparative analysis reveals that three large blocks of Luke's Gospel (3:1-6:19; 8:4-9:50; 18:15-24:11) are comprised mainly of material that is also found in Mark. Furthermore, the material contained in these three blocks is usually reported in the same narrative order as it is in Mark. It makes sense to view Luke's parables as a combination of material from Mark with Q material. However, the material from Mark is not simply transmitted word for word. Luke modifies what he takes over from Mark and makes it its own. Furthermore, Luke's language is different from the other Synoptic Gospels' and there are blocks of distinctive material in his Gospel, which is often called Luken source.

Luke possesses most parables in the Synoptic Gospels, about twenty-three. Eleven are his peculiar ones, seven are shared with Matthew, and the rest five are shared with both Matthew and Mark. Although there is not a particular

chapter like chapter thirteen of Matthew's Gospel, where cluster of parables appears as a distinctive feature, the parables in Luke are arranged in blocks. Most parables are gathered in the large section of Luke, chapter nine to chapter nineteen, which is called the Travel Narrative. Luke's Travel Narrative includes eighteen of the Gospel's twenty-five parables. Five parables appear before chapter nine. Only one of them, "Two Debtors", belongs to Luke's peculiar ones. Two parables appear after chapter nineteen, and both are shared ones with the other two Gospels. Of the eighteen parables in the Travel Narrative, twelve are peculiar to Luke. And most of them appear in chapter fifteen to chapter nineteen. The most famous series of parables in Luke's Travel Narrative is the joyful Lost and Found group. This begins with the Q source Lost Sheep (a man celebrating with his friends; 15:4-7), continues with the Luke's own source Lost Coin (a woman celebrating with her girlfriends; 15:8-10), and climaxes with the Lost Son (the Prodigal Son, a father celebrating with his household; 15:11-32).

The parables recorded in Luke are so rich in their coherence with the whole discourse. Luke improves the Greek style and language in his parables. Indeed, Luke's Gospel is a historical narrative. But the writer does not intend to place fact after fact. The historical event are record with the teachings of Jesus inserted at right places. The parables in Mark and Matthew are most often preceded by phrases like these: "he spoke to them in many parables", "he put another parable before them", "again he put a parable before them". In contrast, the parables in Luke are most often preceded by a related aspect of Jesus' ministry: a healing, a controversy, and most of all teaching. These preceding comments sometimes have a key word repeated in the parable itself, but more often the key word is repeated after the parable in a comment of explanation. The repetition of key words is a distinct feature of Luken style. Together with the frequently use of parallel structure and the coherence of the beginning and the end proves Luke's excellent mastery of discourse arrangement. This unique style also reveals the writer's intention to present the main topic of a parable in its first word or words. This hypothesis can be tested by examining the parables

of Luke in detail.

4.2 The classification of Luke's parable openings

Different from Matthew, the kingdom of heaven is not the main concern of Luke's parable. And there is not a formula like "the kingdom of heaven is like..." in Luke's parable opening as in Matthew's. The way Luke organizes his parables shows an intense particularity. They can also be divided into several groups according to the mood.

4.2.1 Group one: Opening with declarative sentence

(1) Nominal group

This group contains nine parables which open with the phrase "a (certain) man" or equivalent, "a rich man", "a noble man" or "a sower", etc. these parables are usually long, telling a story of someone's behavior or attitude. And there is usually another one or two person in the parable as a contrast. For example, in "Good Samaritan", the speaker describes the response of three passersby and asks the audience to pick out the one who does right.

(2) Existential sentence

This group contains the parables which start with existential sentences "there be..." In this kind of structure, "there" is only formal subject and has "no representational function" (Halliday, 1994). The real subject or "notional subject" is the nominal phrase or clause after the verb. According to traditional grammar, the function of this kind of structure is to make the real subject stand out as the center of information and to introduce a new topic. (Zhang zhenbang, 1999). There are four parables in this group, and two of them are organized in parallel structure. The four parables are all of Luke's peculiar ones.

(3) Negative declaratives

This group consist two parables which opens in a negative way with the word "no one" which is equivalent in meaning to "there is not a man".

4.2.2 Group two: Opening with interrogative sentence

(1) Rhetorical questions

This group consist four parables which start with rhetorical question. This

kind of question is indeed a statement. It is solely for effect, with no answer expected. By the implication that the answer is obvious, it is a means of achieving an emphasis stronger than a direct statement. For the cases of this group, the answer is clearly “nobody” and the equivalent statement should be “no one...” the openings of this group follow such a formula as “ what(which) man ...does not...” Three of the four parables in this group belong to Luke’s peculiar ones.

(2) Questions with answer prepared

This group consist three parables which open with a question followed by an answer prepared. None of the parables in this group is Luke’s peculiar material. Two are share with Matthew and the rest one is shared with both Matthew and Mark. The similarity and difference of them will be analyzed in next chapter.

The kingdom of heaven is not the main theme of Luke’s parables. Luke mentions the “kingdom” only twice (13:18; 13:20) and both of them are shared with Matthew. The favorite form of Luke’s parable openings is “a man” or some equivalent terms. It occurs in seventeen parables (twice in three of them) and is to be understood in two more (6:47; 12:42). It is found in two of the five parables Luke shares with both Matthew and Mark, and in five of the seven parables he shares only with Matthew. Of the eleven parables peculiar to Luke, ten parables have such form in their opening words. Although we can not construct a formula for Luke like that has given to Matthew in preceding chapter, we may say that both Luke’s peculiar parables and his shared material tend to bear the stamp of his own style. Luke likes making contrast in his parable. There are usually two or three person appearing in his parables. Besides, the parables peculiar to Luke show a strong tendency to link the end with the beginning, and this recursion is presumably a discourse feature of some significance which Luke controls better than Matthew or Mark.

4.3 Thematic structure of Luke’s parable opening

Luke’s parable has more complicated thematic structure than Matthew’s.

Most of Luke's parables are longer than one or two sentence, and with the development of the text, some of them do not follow the same theme. Some cases need a further study to look at the whole text. The following article will choose some parables as examples to make an analysis in order to find out the theme of the parables.

4.3.1 Theme of Group one

(1) Nominal group "a man" or equivalent

(i) The first example listed here is the parable called "Barren Fig Tree" (13: 6-9). The text is excerpted from ASV: "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came seeking fruit thereon, and found none. And he said unto the vinedresser, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why doth it also cumber the ground? And he answering saith unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit thenceforth, well; but if not, thou shalt cut it down."

A certain man	had a fig tree
Theme	Rheme

The nominal group "a certain man" is the Theme of this sentence. Since it appears nowhere before and there is nothing background information on the man, it must carry new information. However, the writer uses "certain" here as if to intentionally abate the effect of emphasis. In order to get the real focus of the sentence, it is necessary to move forward to see the thematic structure of the whole paragraph.

This paragraph contains four clause or clause complex. Two of them has reported clause. The themes of this text are listed below:

Paragraph theme (from clause 1): a certain man (the owner of the vineyard)

Clause themes:

independent clause: and he (the owner)

reported clause: behold

independent clause: and he (the vinedresser)

reported clause: Lord, let

This paragraph has the owner as dominant Theme. The second sentence follows the same Theme, and the last sentence turns to the vinedresser. The two reported clause are both imperative clause with the Predicator as the unmarked Theme. So the parable is centered on the owner of the vineyard and his attitude towards the fig tree. However, in original Greek version, “the fig tree” is put in the first position of the opening sentence. That suggests a different thematic interpretation.

(ii) The second example is a famous parable named “Good Samaritan”(10:30-37). It opens with a sentence “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead.” the Theme of the opening sentence is a certain man, that is, the man who is mugged. But from the second sentence, the focus turns from this man to the three passersby, especially the third passerby, the Samaritan. The Samaritan remains the Theme of the second half of the parable. And in the last sentence, Jesus asks “Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers?” this question is a response to the question asked by a lawyer before the parable is told: “who is my neighbor?” Jesus uses a question to get the audience’s reaction and challenge the lawyer to work it out by himself. The question is not answered until the last words of the discourse: “the third one”. Although the Samaritan is the focus of this parable, it is not apt to make it as the title of the parable. Because it will tell the answer in the very beginning and the speaker’s intention of challenging will be destroyed. The title of this parable can be “The Real Neighbor”

(iii) Another famous parable in this group is the one named ““Prodigal Son”. However, the thematic analysis shows that it is the father that is in focus. The opening sentence of this parable is “A certain man had two sons...” the father is in thematic position. From the second sentence, the focus turns from

the father to the lost son. And then in the middle of the text, the Theme turns back to the father: “But the father said to his servants...” and then it turns to the elder son. At last, the Theme again falls on the father: “And he (the father) said unto him, Son, thou art...” the Theme changes like a circle of father, little son, father, elder son, and father at last. The father is the Theme of the whole text. The real meaning of the parables is the love and forgiveness of the father, which symbolizes the love and patience of God towards man. This parable should be called “the Forgiving Father”.

(iv) The parable called “Pharisee & Publican” shows a strong tendency of making contrast, which can be figured out from its name. Here is the parable: “Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I get. But the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote his breast, saying, God, be thou merciful to me a sinner. I say unto you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” The Themes are listed below:

Paragraph theme: two man

Clause themes:

independent clause: the Pharisee

reported clause: God, I

independent clause: but the publican

reported clause: God, be

The Pharisee and the publican are both domain theme of this parable. The two men are contrasted by being put in the thematic position of each half of the text. The consequences of the two men are exposed in the latter explanation by Jesus.

(v) An exceptive example in this group is the parable of the Rich

Man(12:16-21), where the opening word is not the domain theme of the parable. The parable opens with a nominal group “the ground of a certain rich man”, which is the Theme of the first sentence. However, when the text moves on, this phrase is found nowhere. The theme turns to the rich man till the last sentence. The last sentence is God’s response to the rich man with God as the Theme of the independent clause. But in the last reported clause, it is again the rich man that is the theme.

This group also contains four more parables with similar opening. They are “Sower and Seed” (8:5-8), “Great Supper” (14:16-24), “Pounds or Talents” (19:12-27), and “Wicked Tenant” (20:9-18). The first three are shared with Matthew and the last one is shared with both Matthew and Mark. The analysis of these parables will be on next chapter as a comparison with Matthew.

According to the above analysis, the Themes in this group carry the new information. And they remain the focus of the following part of each paragraph. The writer intends to make the focus in front of the paragraph.

(2) “There be” as Theme

The four parables in this group are opened with existential clauses. There are some disputes in defining Themes of such clause. Halliday suggests that “there” alone is the Theme, while Thompson argues that the Theme should include “there” plus the existential process (the verb “be”). From traditional point of view, “there” is not the real subject. The real subject is the nominal group after the verb. Such case forces us to move further than the opening sentence to the whole text.

The first example is from 7:41-43: “There was a certain creditor which (who) had two debtors...” the existence of the creditor is certainly where the information start and the two debtors are also mentioned in the first sentence. The following dependent clause immediately gives more information of the two debtors: “the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.” The next sentence again put the two debtors in thematic position: “When they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both.” At last the speaker calls the audience’s

attention to the debtors by making them as the missing information: “Which of them therefore will love him most?” it is interesting that the Theme of the first sentence appear again in the Rheme part of the last sentence, and the Theme of the last sentence are mention in advance in the Rheme of the first sentence. The two characters (the two debtors can be seen as a whole) occur correspondingly in the beginning and the end. In this case, the theme of the opening sentence is not the focus of the whole text.

The second example has the similar structure with the first one, and the repetition of the thematic element can be found at the end of the parable. It’s from 16:1-8 “There was a certain rich man, which had a steward...” the parable is called “Dishonest Steward”, but the opening suggests that it is the master who is in focus. This is proved by the fact that the master occurs again at the thematic position of the last sentence: “And his lord commended the unrighteous steward because he had done wisely.” Here the steward is a contrasting character to highlight the master’s leniency, and the parable should be called “the Lenient Master”.

There are two more parables in this group, which shows an obvious contrast between the two characters, and the text is arranged in parallel structure.

One example is the parable of Rich Man & Lazarus. It goes like this: “There was a certain rich man, which (who) was...And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which (who) was...” the two characters are mentioned as the Themes of the first two sentences. In the first half of the parable, the two men are always put side by side to make a contrast. For example: “...the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried.” In the latter part of the parable, the focus is only on the rich man and his miserable situation after death. The contrast is not only lying on the different situation between the two characters but also on the lives before and after death, especially the life of the rich man. The domain Theme is the rich man and the character is contrast finely with the situation Lazarus.

The last example is 18: 1-8, named “Unjust Judge”. It has similar structure with the previous one. The two characters are listed in the first two sentences: “There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, avenge me of mine adversary.” The Themes of the first two sentences are the existence of the judge and the widow. And the text moves on to the mental process of the judge. The judge is the domain Theme and the widow is made to make a contrast.

The parables in this group show a significant feature, that is the contrast of the character. There’s a major character occurring in the opening words (sometimes in the end too) and another character is made in a similar structure as a contrast.

In the existential sentence, the focus is all on the Rheme part, because “there” carries nothing information.

(3) Opening with negative sentence

This group contains only a pair of parables (sometimes they are treated as a whole), which open in a negative way with the word “no one”. The two parables are very short. The thematic analysis can be seen clearly in the figure below:

No man	rendeth a piece from a new garment and putteth it upon an old garment
Theme	Rheme

else	he	will rend the new
textural	topical	Rheme
Theme		

And also	the piece from the new	will not agree with the old
textual	topical	

Theme	Rheme
-------	-------

The topical themes of this parable are “no man”, “he” and “the piece from the new” with “no man” as the paragraph theme. Since the paragraph Theme is the man who does not really exist, it carries no information. The focus naturally falls on the other Theme, that is, the piece of cloth.

The other parable has exactly the same arrangement with the first one. It focuses on the wine which is put into the old skin. However, the parable is usually called “Garment and Wineskins”, which is not the real focus of the parable.

4.3.2 Theme of group two

(1) The parables in this group start with rhetorical questions with WH-element as the opening word. They are different from the normal interrogatives because they need no answer. The parables in this group are very short, usually one or two sentence. The question itself composes the whole text. As introduced in last chapter, the Theme of such clause is functioned by WH-element. But the WH-element does not stand for the missing information, because the aim of such question is not seeking for the missing information but for emphasis. The rhetorical interrogative is emphasized declarative in nature. They are opposite in meaning. For example, the sentence in 11: 5-8: “Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight...” can be transformed into “no one shall have a friend, and...” the speaker uses such question to emphasis that the situation described is impossible and ridiculous. Since “which” stands for nobody, the focus naturally falls on the next element in WH-phrase, that is “you”, which stands for some one who has a friend asking for help in midnight.

The second parable in this group again uses parallel structure and makes comparison. It’s in 14: 28-32: “For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish

it... Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?" the Theme of the first sentence extends from the beginning to a tower; and the Theme of the second sentence extends from or what king to another king. They can be treated as two separate parables. Both the builder and the king are in thematic positions. They are not contrast with each other but analogically hint the same meaning and both of them are equally focused.

The last two parables in this group are also twined ones. They are called "lost and found" parables. The names of the two are "Lost sheep" and "Lost Coin". However, the thematic analysis suggests that it is the owner that is in focus rather than the lost thing. The parable of the Lost Sheep goes like this: "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?" the Theme in this sentence extends from the beginning to them. The man who lost the sheep is the topic. It is similar with the "Lost Coin": "Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?" this parable echoes the previous one. The woman who lost a coin is the real topic. The textual Theme "either" used in the second parable reveals that the two parables are closely connected to each other.

The parables in this group show a strong tendency of occurring in pairs. The twin parables tell similar story and hint the same teaching. Opening by question rather than negative statement encourages audience participation and involvement.

(2) Parables in this group open with WH-interrogative sentences and the answers are provided right after the question. The WH-element is put in the opening position in order to attract the audience's interest and involvement. There are also pair of twined parables which have the kingdom of heaven as the Theme. They are in 13:18-19; 20-21. Let's take the parable in 13:20-21 as an

example to illustrate their thematic structure. The parable contains only two sentences: “Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.”

paragraph Theme: whereunto

independent theme: it (the kingdom of heaven)

dependent theme: which (leaven)

The focus of this parable is the character of the kingdom. The other kingdom parable has the same structure with this one. and there’s one more parable in this group, which has been discussed in last chapter.

4.4 The thematic feature of Luke’s parable

There are four types thematic arrangement in Luke’s parables:

The first type contains the parables with only one domain theme, which is the opening word or phrase of the parable. And in many cases that word is found been repeated in the middle and at the end of the parable. For example, the parable in 19:12-27 opens with the phrase “a certain noble man”. This nobleman is the domain Theme of this text. And with the development of the story, it reoccurs at thematic position several times including the last sentence.

The second type contains parables which have two or three main characters. One of them (the one in the opening sentence) functions as the domain Theme and the others are mentioned as a contrast or comparison. This group includes “Rich Man and Lazarus”. In that parable the character of the rich man is more impressive by contrast with Lazalus.

The third type contains parables which have two characters and both of them are equally focused. The two characters are in opposite situation to make a contrast or in a similar situation to teach the same lesson. An example of the previous case is “Good and Bad Servant” where the two servants (are put together to make a contrast of their different consequence) serve the cord with different heart and thus gain different consequence. The example of the latter case is lost coin and cost sheep. They tell a similar story which teaches the love

of God towards the last people.

The last type is somewhat special in Luke's parables. In those cases the theme of the opening sentence is not the domain theme of the whole text. This type contains three parables, the Samaritan, Two Debtors and the Fool Rich Man. In those cases the domain theme is found in the last sentence.

4.4 Summary

Most of Luke's parables propose the main theme in the opening words. Only three of all the twenty-three parables put the main theme in the last sentence. Luke's favorite theme is different kinds of people. His favorite opening is "a man" or equivalent. He likes to make contrast of those people in his parables. There are usually two or more characters in his parables. In some cases one is in major focus and the others are in contrast to make the main character highlighted; while in some other cases the two characters are equally focused. The use of parallel structure is another feature of Luke's parables. Some parables are arranged in pairs. They have similar structure and teach the similar lesson.

Chapter 5. The Comparison of Matthew and Luke in terms of Their Thematic Features in Opening a Parable

Chapter three and chapter four discussed the opening and Theme choice of the parables in the Gospel of Matthew and Luke. This chapter will make a comparison of the two. Matthew and Luke share twelve parables, including five shared with Mark. Do they open these parables in a same way or have different focus? The examination of the thematic structure of opening sentence can help to make it clearly. This chapter will base on the findings of the preceding chapters and further discusses the distinctive features of the parable opening and theme choice of Matthew and Luke.

5.1 The analysis of the parables shared by the two Gospels

5.1.1 The parables with similar openings

Matthew and Luke shares six parables which opens in a same way. Three of them are also shared with Mark.

(1) The parable of Two Houses

Matthew: “whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them...And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not...”

Luke: “Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings...But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that...”

This parable talks about the two builders who build their houses on different bases. This parable can be naturally divided into two parts, each tells one builder and his house. Both Matthew and Luke use the indefinite pronoun “whosoever” as their opening word. It is also the Domain theme of the parable. It means that both of the two Gospel writers intend to put the focus on the builder rather than the house. However, there’s a little difference in the opening of the second part. The difference falls on the conjunction, that is, the textural theme of the sentence. Matthew uses “and every one that...” while Luke uses

“but he that...” the second part tells the man who build his house on the sand, contrasting to the first one who build his house on the rock. The first builder figures the people who listen the teaching of Jesus and the second one is the one who don't. The use of “but” signals a clear transition in meaning and it makes the contrastive effect more obvious.

(2) The parable of Children in the Market Place

Matthew: “whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like...”

Luke: “Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? And to what are they like? They are like...”

The parable starts with a question. Both of the two writers use “whereunto” to start the parable. The domain theme of the parable is the manner of the current generation. Luke uses two similar questions to make an emphasis.

(3) The parable of Good and Bad Servant

Matthew: “Who then is a faithful and wise servant... if that evil servant...”

Luke: “Who then is that faithful and wise steward...if that servant...”

The two Gospels have almost the same opening. This parable again makes a contrast between two characters. The parable opens with a WH-interrogative and the missing information is the good servant. The second part begins with an adverbial clause and the topical Theme is the bad servant. The title “Good and Bad Servant” is very apt to this parable.

(4) The parable of Garment and Wineskins

Matthew: “No man putteth a piece of new cloth...Neither do men put...”

Luke: “No man putteth a piece of a new cloth...And no man putteth new wine”

This is a twined parable which has two parts expressing the same message. The openings of the parables in the two Gospels are exactly the same. “No man” is the Theme of both of the two versions. The second part has some difference. Matthew's parable uses an elliptical clause to start the second part while Luke uses normal statement. In spite the difference in form, the topical Theme remains the same. As shown in the figure:

a.

Neither	do	man	Put...
conjunctive	finite	topical	Rheme
Theme			

b.

And	no	man	puttheth...
conjunctive	adjunct	topical	Rheme
Theme			

The choice of different form shows different intention in constructing the discourse. Matthew's version shows more intention of connecting the first part and the second, while Luke's shows more intention of contrast.

(5) The parable of Sower and Seed

Matthew: "a sower went forth to sow..."

Luke: "A sower went out to sow his seed..."

Both of Matthew and Luke put the sower in the thematic position. However, with the development of the discourse, they both change the theme to the seeds. In the latter part of the text, it is the situation of the seeds that is in focus. Since neither of the two Themes is repeated at the end of the text, so it is more suitable to take both of them as the main themes.

(6) The parable of Budding Fig Tree

Matthew: "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender..."

Luke: "Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth..."

Both of the two version open with an imperative as a prelude, and both of them start the narrative part of the parable with adverbial clause. There are some other parables which also have imperative prelude. But they are not treated as the starting part of the parable, because the connection of the prelude and the parable are not as close as in this one. In this case, the topical themes "his" and "they" are the reference of the Rheme of the preceding sentence. It shows a

strong tendency of connecting the two sentences. Luke's parable differs from Matthew's in the extending of the theme. Matthew's theme is only the fig tree while Luke's is the fig tree and all trees. Luke adds all trees into his theme in order to express that the latter situation talked in the parable is not particular to the fig tree but to all trees. The fig tree is only taken out as an example.

None of the above parables mentions the kingdom of heaven, which is the main theme of Matthew's parable. It seems that Matthew lost his feature in the shared parable. However, Luke keeps his favorite opening of "a man" or equivalent in his shared parables, and also his likeness of contrasting, although not as frequent as in his own materials.

5.1.2 The Parables with different openings

Although Matthew and Luke share the same parables, sometimes they open differently. Generally, different opening shows different Theme. The following discussion will show the different thematic choice of Matthew and Luke when they record the same parable.

(1) The parable of Great Supper

Matthew: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which..."

Luke: "A certain man made a great supper, and bade many..."

Matthew and Luke have totally different opening in recording this parable. The Theme of Matthew's version is the kingdom of heaven while the Theme of Luke's is a certain man. The below figure shows the Themes of the two sentence clearly:

The kingdom of heaven	is like unto a certain king, which...
Theme	Rheme

A certain man	A certain man made a great supper, and bade many...
Theme	Rheme

In Matthew's parable, there's no repetition of the main theme in the latter part of the text. But in Luke's parable, the theme of the first sentence reoccurs several times. It is also the theme of the last sentence.

(2) The parable of Pounds

Matthew: "the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country..."

Luke: "A certain nobleman went into a far country..."

Like the first parable, this one also shows great difference in the opening words. Matthew and Luke choose different theme in recording the same parable. The Theme of Matthew's version is the kingdom of heaven but it is different in Luke's version, which is a noble man. in spite the different choice of the Theme, neither of the two parables focus on the pounds. So the title of this parable is not apt.

The first two parables are the typical examples of this group. They show most obvious difference of Matthew and Luke. In these two parables, both of the two writers follow their own significant particularities in opening a parable. Matthew opens with "the "kingdom of heaven" while Luke opens with "a man". As discussed in preceding chapters, the kingdom of heaven is the major theme of Matthew's parables but not of Luke's. Matthew introduces the focus of parable in the very beginning words in order to make it clear. In contrast, Luke prefers to reveal the focus clearer and clearer with the development of the text. The opening words of Luke's parable introduce the main character but provide little information about it. It challenges the audience to move forward to get the real point of the parable.

(3) The parable of Leaven

Matthew: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which..."

Luke: "Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven..."

Matthew's version still follow his main theme "the kingdom of heaven", but Luke opens the parable with a WH-interrogative and put the real focus, the kingdom of heaven, in the Rheme part.

(4) the parable of Mustard Seed

Matthew: "The kingdom of heaven is like to..."

Luke: "Unto what is the kingdom of God like?"

Again, the kingdom of heaven is put at the thematic position in Matthew's parable but is part of the Rheme in Luke's version.

These two parables are the only ones where Luke mentions the kingdom of heaven. But he doesn't reveal it directly in the opening words but hides it by asking a question, and make it stand out as the main theme at the second sentence. It again shows Luke's likeness to reveal the focus indirectly and gradually, while Matthew likes to make it obvious in the opening words.

In above examples, the Theme of Matthew's sentence carries given information while the Theme of Luke's carries new information. Matthew tends to introduce the topic in the very beginning of the sentence and leave all the new information in the Rheme part. But Luke put the Theme in the focus as new information in the first sentence and develops it in the following part of the paragraph.

(5) The parable of Lost Sheep

Matthew: "if a man has a hundred sheep..."

Luke: "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose..."

In this parable, Luke differs from Matthew in his involving of the audience in his opening. When Matthew goes directly to the story, Luke calls the audience's attention by referring to them with the word "you" in his theme. This makes the audience think that he is just the topic of the parable, thus makes the parable more attractive. However, although revealed in different way, the theme of this parable is the one who lost a sheep. It is not apt to use the lost sheep as the title, or there would be a misleading of the focus.

(6) The parable of Wicked Tenants

Matthew: "There was a certain householder, which (who) planted a vineyard..."

Luke: "A certain man planted a vineyard..."

It is obvious that both of the two versions intend to make the owner of the vineyard as the topic of the parable. And they both emphasize it by applying the same theme in the last sentence. So the name of the parable should be the owner of the vineyard. Matthew provides more information in his opening sentence, and use more complicated sentence structure.

Matthew and Luke show more particular feature in this group. Matthew keeps his main topic “the kingdom of heaven” in four of the six parables and Luke uses his favorite form “a man” or equivalent to open three parables and WH-interrogative to the other three. There are two parables (Mustard Seed and Wicked Tenants) which are also shared by Mark. It is generally agreed that Luke and Matthew copy them from Mark. Luke’s parables are identical with Mark’s in theme and structure while Matthew makes some change. It suggests that Matthew intends to show more particularity and make his own mark in shared materials.

5.2 The comparison of the theme choice of the two Gospels

The features of Matthew and Luke are found not so significant in the parables they share as in their particular materials. Matthew’s favorite opening “the kingdom of heaven” is found in four of the twelve parables, and Luke opens five parables with his favorite form “a man” or equivalent. However, the two Gospel writers still leave some marks of their own feature. That makes difference when they record the same parable. Based on the above comparison and the analysis in preceding chapters, the writer find that there are both similarities and differences of the two Gospels in their opening and thematic arrangement.

5.2.1 Similarities

First, both Matthew and Luke tend to have a typical form of opening a parable, that’s also their major themes. And the tendency to use it is strongest in the material unique to each. Matthew’s favorite formula is “the kingdom of heaven is like...” which composes eleven of the twenty parables belonged to Matthew. Of the eight parables which are peculiar to Matthew, seven are opened

with this formula. Luke likes to use the term “a man” or equivalent, “a nobleman”, “a sower”...to open his parables. Nine parables are opened with this term and five of them are found in Luke’s unique materials.

Second, in the shared parables, Matthew and Luke have similar even the same opening and discourse structure. For example, they both open some parables with WH-interrogatives, including rhetorical questions, and some others with existential sentence. Both of the two writers weaken their unique feature in the shared materials. The main theme of the unique parables and that of the shared materials are different. For example, the main concern of Matthew’s particular parables is the kingdom of heaven. But it is only appears four times in the twelve parables shared by Luke.

Third, both of the two writers like to educe the main theme in the opening words. The theme of the first sentence is often the theme of the whole text. It is found more obvious in Matthew. Matthew likes to reveal the focus of the parable in the very beginning, and the reader or audience can easily catch the main idea of the parable as soon as the parable starts. Luke also likes to put the main theme in the first sentence, but with more skill.

Forth, there are many parables which are organized in pairs in both of the two Gospels. These parables have similar theme and structure, convey the same message. For example, Matthew add a parable named “Wheat and Tares” to reinforce the parable of “the sower”. And the parables of “Treasure” and “Pearl” are another pair which has the same meaning. Luke also has some twined parables. For example, the parables of “Lost Sheep” and “Lost Coin” appear next to each other. They have the same hidden meaning and thematic structure. “Mustard” and “Leaven” are paired parables which share by the two Gospels. Besides the paired organization of parables, Matthew and Luke also use parallel structure within the parables. But it is found to be more obvious in Luke than in Matthew.

5.2.2 Differences

Although Matthew and Luke shared almost half of their parables with

each other, they intend to make their parables unique to themselves. The way they open a parable and their thematic arrangement reveal their different concern of the parables. There are several aspects where the two Gospel writers differ from each other in recording a parable.

First, the typical Theme of the two Gospels carries different information. “The kingdom of heaven” is the main Theme of Matthew’s parable. It carries given information. The focus is put on the Rheme part of the sentence. Luke likes to put the new information in his Theme as well as in Rheme. He’s favorite opening is “a man” or equivalent. The function of this type of opening is making the topic the center of information.

Second, the main topic of their parables is different. Matthew’s parables concern the kingdom of heaven mostly. But this term is found appearing only twice in Luke’s parables as Themes. Most of Luke’s parables tell a personal story with the opening words “a man” or equivalent. The different openings show their different intention of telling parables. Matthew intends to describe what the kingdom of heaven is like with his parable. He compares the kingdom to many different things in order to give the audience a vivid image. In contrast, Luke’s parable is more like a narrative. The main character is the focus of the text. Luke likes to challenge the audience figure out the meaning of the parable themselves. This contrast is obvious when the two writers record the same parables. For example, in the parable of “the Great Supper”, Matthew opens with “the kingdom of heaven” while Luke opens with “a certain man”. Matthew intends to show clearly that this parable is a hidden message on the kingdom of heaven. But Luke shows that it is a story about a man.

Third, Matthew intends to give as much information as possible in the opening sentence. But Luke just introduces the main character in the opening words and leaves most information in the rest part of the text. This can be proved by the structure of their first sentence. Matthew likes to use complicated sentence structure. His typical opening sentence is “the kingdom of heaven is like a man who...” the formula not only reveals the theme of the parable but

also provides the information of the person or thing which is created to make a comparison. In contrast, Luke prefers to use simple sentence to open his parables, such as “a certain man has two sons”. Matthew likes to reveal the topic directly while Luke prefers an indirect way. The parable of Leaven is a typical example. Matthew opens this parable with ““The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which...” but Luke opens the same parable in an indirect way, with a question: “Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God?” it shows that Luke intends to hide the theme of the parable in the beginning and ask the involvement of the audience.

Forth, compared with Matthew, the parables of Luke show a strong tendency to link the end with the beginning. And by this way the main theme is revealed. The recursion of the main character is one of the significant features of Luke’s parable. Luke usually introduces the theme in the opening sentence and develops it in the latter part of the text. The repetition of the topic is found much less in Matthew’s parables. One reason is that Matthew’s peculiar parables are usually short (one or two sentence) while Luke’s are much longer. Matthew intends to make the purpose of the parable clear within limited words while Luke prefers to make it hidden in a story. Luke’s parables are more like narratives which tell stories of the characters. Sometimes there are two leading characters in Luke’s parable, and they are organized to appear alternatively in the text. The main character will be repeated in the last sentence.

At last, there are more paired parables in Matthew than in Luke. There are five couples of parables in Matthew; half of them belong to Matthew’s unique material. Only one pair is found in Luke. However, Luke is superior in making comparison or contrast within the parable. Nine of Luke’s parables embody this feature. These parables usually have an alternation of the themes. The two themes reinforce or contrast each in order to make emphasis. A typical example is the parable of “Rich man and Lazarus”. In this parable, the writer makes the contrast from two levels. One is the contrast of the lives of two men. The other is the contrast of the life before and after death. When recording the same

parable, Luke shows more tendencies to make contrast. For example, in the parable of “the Two House”, Matthew and Luke use different conjunctions when they start the second part. Matthew uses “and” which shows continuative relation of the two parts while Luke uses transitional conjunctive “but” which makes the effect of contrast distinctive.

5.3 Summery

Both Matthew and Luke have a typical form of parable opening and both of them have a main topic in their parables. The topic of Matthew’s parable is easier to get because it is concluded by the writer and revealed clearly in the opening words. Matthew with his formula “the kingdom of heaven is like...” tends to give the key to the interpretation of the parable at the beginning. By avoiding this, Luke does more to let the story speak and offer challenge to the audience. Both of the two writers have their own advantage. Matthew’s parable is clear and readable, and Luke’s parable is more polished and attractive. However, it is fair to say that Luke is a more artful user of parables than Matthew.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

The real meaning of a parable has always been a hot topic in many fields. What message does a parable intend to express? This question has been discussed by a great many scholars from various aspects. This thesis provides a new way to answer this question by studying the opening words of the parable. The writer introduces the theme theory of functional grammar to the parabolic study. According to Halliday, the Theme is “what the clause is about”, and the Theme choice of a text reveals the underlying concerns of the writer. (Halliday, 1994). The study of the Theme is helpful to figure out what the parable is about. Since the theme is the first constituent of the clause, the thesis focuses the study on the opening words of the parable.

The thesis discusses the parable openings of two Gospels, Matthew and Luke, which are rich in their parabolic materials, and make a comparison of them. It is found that both of the two Gospel writers intend to reveal the topic of the parable in its opening words. They like to open the parable with declaratives and nominal group which is the unmarked Theme. However, they have different formula to open a parable. Matthew’s favorite opening is “The kingdom of heaven is like...” and Luke likes to open with the phrase “a man” or equivalent, “a sower”, “a householder” and so on. The openings show their different concerns. The main concern of Matthew’s parable is the kingdom of heaven, which is shown directly in its openings. And Luke pays more attention to personal stories. Compare to Luke, Matthew has a stronger intention to reveal the topic in the very beginning and give much information in the Rheme part of his opening sentence. It is easy to get the focus of Matthew’s parable just by looking at the first sentence. But Luke likes to open his parables with simple words. He just introduces the main character without giving much information and intentionally reveals the focus step by step with the development of the text. Besides, the parables of Luke show a stronger tendency to link the beginning

and the end. Most of Luke's parable has a domain theme appearing in the first sentence and reoccurs in the last sentence, sometimes in the middle part too. It makes the text coherent. Moreover, compared to Matthew, Luke likes to make contrast in his parables, which usually has two themes appearing alternatively in the text. It is not difficult to tell that Luke is more skillful in discourse arrangement.

A further finding of this thesis is that some titles of the parables are unmatchable with their themes. This happens in both Matthew and Luke. The titles doesn't not exist in the original Greek version but are added in the process of translating into English. Now these titles are generally used in many bible versions. But many of them don't reflect the real focus of the parable and thus make a misleading. This is a serious problem because it will affect the readers understanding in reading parables. This thesis suggests different titles based on the theme analysis of the parable.

Parabolic study, and any other studies, always needs innovation and new blood. This thesis makes a contribution to this field by studying the parable from the functional point of view. It focuses on the opening words of parables and discusses the theme choice and arrangement of the parables of Matthew and Luke. The findings of this thesis are only a small piece in the vast radiation of parabolic study, and there are many limitations. For example, because the definition of parable is unclear, not all the parables are discussed. Besides, the scripture cited in this thesis is limited in the King James Version; the other versions may have different translations. The findings may be different when including more versions under discussion. This thesis could move forward to make a discussion on the different bible versions. The writer will make this thesis a starting point and go further in the future.

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