For almost half a century, C. H. Dodd's *The Parables of the Kingdom* and Joachim Jeremias' *The Parables of Jesus* served students as the chief textbooks on their subject. More recently, Bernard Brandon Scott's *Hear Then the Parable* has been in some quarters the standard work on the parables. Now it is Scott's turn to be superceded. When students ask about the parables, many of us from now on will direct them first to Hultgren's impressive and accessible volume.

The work offers detailed commentary upon thirty-eight parables in the synoptics. Hultgren, Professor of New Testament at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, discerns seven different types of parables—parables of the revelation of God (e.g. the lost coin, Luke 15:8-10), parables of exemplary behavior (e.g. the good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37), parables of wisdom (e.g. the ten maidens, Matt 25:1-13), parables of life before God (e.g., the barren fig tree, Luke 13:6-9), parables of final judgment (e.g. the dragnet, Matt 13:47-50), allegorical parables (e.g., the wedding feast, Matt 22:1-14), and parables of the kingdom (e.g. the seed growing secretly, Mark 4:26-29). For each parable Hultgren supplies his own translation, notes on the text and translation, exegetical commentary, exposition, and select bibliography. The exegetical sections explore the usual historical-critical questions, including that of authenticity. But the focus is upon the parables as they stand within the canonical Gospels. The sections of exposition make helpful homiletical and theological observations.

The bulk of the book is a parable-by-parable and verse-by-verse analysis, after which Hultgren briefly summarizes his conclusions about the three synoptic evangelists as interpreters of the parables. He then closes with a chapter on the parables in the *Gospel of Thomas*. In this Hultgren argues against the view that *Thomas* was composed independently of the synoptics. At most some of its materials may be independent. But it probably comes from the second century; it likely presupposes a fourfold Gospel collection; and speculation about an earlier version of *Thomas* is just that, speculation.

This is an excellent book, for many reasons. It is comprehensive, which sets it apart from everything else on its subject. It is cautious in its historical judg-
ments. It is conversant and up-to-date with the secondary literature. Its exegetical assessments are consistently considered and balanced. It succeeds as both an historical-critical contribution and as a homiletical aide. It does not just summarize previous scholarship but often adds new insights and arguments (the long review of "the least of these my brothers and sisters" in Matt 25:37-40 makes the strongest case that I have seen for identifying "the least" not with Christians but with all in need). And, despite the academic detail, the book is remarkably free of jargon and should be accessible to a very wide audience.

There is not much to complain about. I was surprised to see no acknowledgement of the allusions to the story of Joseph in the parable of the faithful and wise slave in Matt 24:45-51 = Luke 12:42-46 (allusions observed by Albertus Magnus, Grotius, Matthew Henry, and C. F. Evans, among others). While the lapse, if that is the right word, is exceptional, it is perhaps indicative of the only minor criticism I wish to register. Ever since Adolf Jülicher's Die Gleichnisreden Jesu (1899), there has been a very strong tendency to ignore premodern interpretations of the parables. Dodd's book is symptomatic. He began by recounting Augustine's thoroughgoing allegorical reading of the parable of the Good Samaritan, in which the mugged man is Adam, the muggers are the devil and his angels, the Good Samaritan is Jesus, etc. Dodd introduced Augustine only to dismiss him. For Dodd, error reigned from Bishop Augustine to Bishop Trench, until the advent of Adolf Jülicher, who saved us from our allegorical sins. So one paragraph suffices to sum up almost the whole history of the exegesis of the parables. We turn p. 1 feeling that we may ignore the ancestors, that we need pay attention only to ourselves, who have finally got it right. But this is quite unfair to those who came before us, and it leaves us impoverished. There is, despite the allegorical excesses, an abundance of very useful exegetical observations in patristic, medieval, and Reformation writers—especially if one is concerned, as is Hultgren, not just with historical-critical exegesis but also with theology and homiletics. So I wish that he had paid far greater attention to earlier commentators and theologians and in this way helped students to realize how valuable they can be. It is true that Chrysostom and Augustine are, counted together, quoted half a dozen times, and sometimes while the history of interpretation becomes part of the argument (see e.g. pp. 324-25). Still, I wish that the book did more to undo the general impression condescendingly communicated by so much of modern scholarship (if only by its silence), that critical exegesis can do just fine without earlier ecclesiastical exegesis.