

TWO SONS AND THREE TRADITIONS

Abstract

The Parable of the Two Sons is but a five-verse parable found only in Matthew (21:28-32). The parable, considering its brevity and the inclusion of Jesus' explanation, ought to be straightforward, and we should therefore find little disagreement among biblical scholars about the parable's meaning. However, disagreement is common and is not confined to contemporary scholarship. Some of the disagreement is a result of the three textual variants we have for this parable. Some of the disagreement concerns the relation between the verses of the parable proper (28-30) and Jesus' explanation of the parable in the final two verses (31-32). Lastly, some of the disagreement concerns what constitutes genuine disobedience. In an effort to reach a sound interpretation of the parable and resolve much of the disagreement, the following is set forth. (1) The problem of textual variants becomes trivial if the interpretation of the parable can remain consistent across the textual variants. (2) The interpretation of the parable can remain consistent across the textual variants if (2a) both sons are recognized as demonstrating a measure of obedience and a measure of disobedience and (2b) the full parable (vv. 28-32) teaches us that Jesus *intended* (2a) by pointing us toward a "how much more" interpretation that implies true obedience encompasses both right belief or right speech and right action.

Key Words: Two Sons, parable, traditions, obedience, disobedience, *qal wahomer*

INTRODUCTION

The Parable of the Two Sons appears only in Matthew, and therein it comprises only five verses of chapter 21 (21:28-32). In addition to the parable proper, these five verses also contain Jesus' follow up question to His listeners regarding who did the will of the father, the response of the listeners to this question and Jesus' apparent explication of the parable. The parable itself is comprised of three short verses, namely verses 28-30. Thus, the parable, considering its brevity and the inclusion of an explanation, ought to be straightforward, and we should find little disagreement between biblical scholars about meaning. However, disagreement exists. Part of this disagreement is a function of the several received textual variants and the different interpretations that arise from the choice regarding which is original. Part is a function of the relation between the parable itself, verses 28-30, and Jesus' explanation in the subsequent verses, verses 31-32. Lastly, regardless of the order in which the sons are presented, part is also a function of disagreement over what constitutes disobedience. Thus, this brief parable has generated much debate. Contrary to many interpreters, the following is advanced. (1) The problem of textual variants becomes trivial if the interpretation of the parable can remain consistent across the textual variants. (2) The interpretation of the parable can remain consistent across the textual variants if (2a) both sons are recognized as demonstrating a measure of obedience and a measure of disobedience and (2b) the full parable (vv. 28-32) teaches us that Jesus *intended* (2a) by pointing us toward a "how much more" interpretation that implies true obedience encompasses both right belief or right speech and right action. At the outset, we shall consider a basic translation of the parable, the parable's background and the differing received texts.

TRANSLATION

Verses 28-32 of chapter 21 of Matthew are below.¹ A working translation will provide a foundation for subsequent sections. As noted at the outset, though, we have several different versions of the parable in the received texts. The Greek New Testament (GNT) version below is based upon that version for which the best textual evidence exists. This version is usually “Tradition A.”

21:28 tí dè hymîn dokeî ánthrōpos eîchen tékna dýo kai
proselthōn tōi prōtōieîpen téknon hýpage
sémeron ergázou en tōi ampelōni.

21:29 ho dè apokritheîs eîpen ou thélō hýsteron dè
metamelētheîs apêlthen.

21:30 proselthōn dè tōi hetérōi eîpen hōsaútōs ho dè
apokritheîs eîpen egókýrie kai ouk apêlthen.

21:31 tís ek tôn dýo epoíesen tò thélēma tou patrós légousin
ho prōtoślégei autoîs ho Iēsoûs
amēn légō hymîn hōti hoi telōnai kai hai pórnai proágousin
hymâs eis tēn basileían tou theou.

21:32 êlthen gar Iōánnēs pròs hymâs en hodōi dikaiosýnēs kai
oukepisteúsate autōi hoi dè
telōnai kai hai pórnai epísteusan autōi hymeîs dè idóntes oudè
metemelēthēte hýsteron tou
pisteúsate autōi.

Major Bible translations are largely consistent in their translation of Matthew 21:28-32, but there are two noteworthy differences. First, the aorist passive participle *prōtōieîpen* in verse 29 is rendered differently in different translations. The ESV and the NIV use “changed his

1. The Greek here is from the Greek New Testament (GNT). Divergent interpretations of the parable that result from taking one received text over another do not turn on different understanding of the Greek but, rather, arise from the overall differing structures of the texts received. In other words, the disagreement is not over meaning implied by different sentence structure nor over different semantic ranges of words.

mind,” whereas the NASB uses “regretted” and the RSV uses “repented.” The BDAG indicates that all three renderings are valid for the verb *prōtōieîpen* but suggests that “changed his mind” (with a regretful focus) is best in Matthew 21:29 and 32.² In any case, the thrust of the parable is not significantly changed. Second, the aorist active participle *idóntes* in verse 32 has no stated object. Differing Bible versions use “it” or “this” as an implied object. “This” seems to work better in modern English, but in either case the pronominal reference is either to John’s righteousness, the tax collectors’ and harlots’ belief or both John’s righteousness and the tax collectors’ and harlots’ belief. It might be argued cogently that the pronominal reference, due to the lack of a stated pronoun, is best understood as a reference to the whole, namely both John’s righteousness and the tax collectors’ and the harlots’ belief. However, there is no significant impact to this paper as a result of choices made here. Thus, our basic working translation will be consistent with the NIV, but the verbal form in verse 32 is altered to match the usage in verse 29; for, the NIV uses “repent” in 32 for the verbal form rendered “changed (his) mind” in verse 29.

21:28 “What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard.’

21:29 “‘I will not,’ he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.

21:30 “Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but he did not go.

21:31 “Which of the two did what his father wanted?” “The first,” they answered. Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you,

2. Frederick William Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 639.

the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you.

21:32 For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not change your mind and believe him.

BACKGROUND AND GENERALITIES

Klyne Snodgrass classifies the Parable of the Two Sons as a “juridical parable.”³ The parable indeed bears similarity to OT pericopes wherein a prophet announces judgment, and the hearer(s) condemn themselves.⁴ Further, Snodgrass considers whether the entire parable arose as a distinct unit from Jesus, including verses 31 and 32, or whether verses 31 and 32 were added later in order to change the thrust of the parable. Ultimately, Snodgrass concludes that there is solid ground for considering verses 31 and 32 as issuing from Jesus, though the entire parable likely underwent some measure of redaction.⁵ Joachim Jeremias draws a similar conclusion about verses 28-30 when he affirms that the parable has Palestinian origins and that the parable is older than the written text of the synoptic gospels.⁶ However, Jeremias notes that the interpretive verses 31 and 32 drive the parable toward a soteriological interpretation and thus are indicative of later allegorizing.⁷ Snodgrass disagrees that the verses have this function and thus does not locate a soteriological thrust in the verses.⁸ Therefore, we can affirm the following. The Parable of the Two Sons can be linked to Jesus as a parable actually told by Jesus. However, the

3. Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), 266.

4. *Ibid.* Snodgrass cites both Isaiah 5 and 1 Samuel 12.

5. *Ibid.*, 273.

6. Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1954), 89.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 274-275.

linkage to Jesus of the interpretive verses that follow the three short verses of the parable proper is debated. Further, the theological effect of including these verses is also debated. The understanding of the general thrust of the parable will be considered in subsequent sections.

TEXTUAL VARIANTS

Wendell Langley notes that there are three different manuscript traditions (accepted textual variants) of Matthew 21:28-32, but two of the traditions have stronger support than the third.⁹ Snodgrass likewise recognizes the three traditions/variants and notes that all three “have their defenders.”¹⁰ We can characterize the traditions as A, B and C. We shall consider each tradition briefly in terms that allow us to delineate the differences.

Tradition A is represented by major Bible translations that place in first position the son who initially gave a verbal refusal to go to the vineyard but then indeed went. The second son consented to go but did not. The first son is then identified as the one who did the father’s will. Tradition B reverses the order of the sons. Thus, the first son consented to go but did not, and the second son said he would not go but ultimately did. The second son is then identified as the one who did the father’s will. Langley draws on Bruce Metzger and indicates that textual support for tradition A is “slightly” stronger.¹¹ In either case, the same son does the father’s will, namely the one who initially refused. The question of whether the switching of the order of the sons results in interpretive differences will be set to the side for now. The third tradition, tradition C, diverges radically from traditions A and B. Tradition C presents the first son as the one who initially refused to go but then went and the second son as the one who agreed to go but did not.¹² In this respect,

9. Wendell E. Langley, S.J., “The Parable of the Two Sons (Matthew 21:28-32) against Its Semitic and Rabbinic Backdrop,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (1996): 228.

10. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 271.

11. Langley, “The Parable of the Two Sons,” 230.

12. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 271.

Tradition C is similar to tradition A. However, tradition C then identifies the second son as the one who did the father's will.¹³ As opposed to the difference between traditions A and B, the divergence found in tradition C seems to indicate a significant theological difference; tradition C is indeed the most difficult of the traditions to interpret in general and certainly in terms of a framework that fits the traditional interpretation of the parable. Though Langley notes that the manuscript support for tradition C is weak, it is possible to interpret the parable in such a way that all three traditions are consistent with one interpretation.¹⁴ First, however, we shall consider historical and modern interpretations of the parable. These interpretations focus largely on tradition A but recognize tradition B as being fundamentally consistent with tradition A from a theological standpoint.

COMMON INTERPRETATION

As the foregoing indicates, developing a common interpretation of the Parable of the Two Sons, one consistent with all three traditions, can prove difficult. However, a few basic areas of agreement between all interpreters, regardless of tradition, can be identified. First, both obedience and disobedience are present in the parable. All interpreters find these elements, though not always in the same places. Second, there is, historically, a contrast recognized in the parable between saying and doing or believing and doing.¹⁵ Third, the will of the father, especially considering Jesus' question in verse 31, is a significant theme. Beyond these elements, disagreements abound. Let us consider the history of interpretation.

Historical Interpretation

13. Ibid.

14. Langley, "The Parable of the Two Sons," 232. Snodgrass concurs with this judgment (271).

15. W. L. Richards, "Another Look at the Parable of the Two Sons," *Biblical Research* 23 (1978): 7.

Paul Foster notes that the pre-Matthean tradition understood the first son in the tradition A manuscripts to be the obedient son and indeed followed the order of the sons in tradition A.¹⁶ However, he notes that the Matthean community likely utilized tradition B; therefore, the second son, the first son in tradition A, was he who was judged to be obedient.¹⁷ This order of the sons allowed the Christian community to associate themselves with the second, obedient son and to associate the Jewish community with the first son.¹⁸ Further, prior to the early church fathers and likely before significant allegorization, the parable was understood as a parable speaking to the “dichotomy between hearing and doing the father’s will.”¹⁹ Both pre-Matthean and Matthean communities had a straightforward understanding of the parable and relied on the major manuscript traditions, namely traditions A and B. Interestingly, this basic understanding of the communities is similar to that put forth by many contemporary interpreters, such as Snodgrass. Snodgrass’ basic understanding is consistent with the pre-Matthean tradition but avoids the association of the sons with Jews and Gentiles that is found in the Matthean tradition. Thus, we can consider the early church era that followed.

Snodgrass notes that from the time of Jerome at least to the Reformation, the church allegorized the two sons in the parable: the second son in Tradition B (the first son in tradition A) represented the Gentiles and the first son in tradition B (the second son in tradition A) represented the Jews.²⁰ This is consistent with the Matthean community’s understanding. However, allegorization in the early church went further, as the vineyard came to be identified with Israel and the father with God.²¹ Jeremias draws the same conclusion, in that

16. Paul Foster, “A Tale of Two Sons: But Which One Did the Far, far Better Thing? A Study of Matt 21:28-32,” *New Testament Studies* 47 (2001): 37.

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*

20. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 270.

21. *Ibid.*

he finds allegorization to be a feature of early interpretation of the parable.²² Jerome himself accepted a reading that understood the first son (again in tradition A) as referring to sinners, e.g. tax collectors, and the second son as referring to the leadership of Israel, i.e. the Pharisees.²³ Jerome's view on tradition C, though, appears to be inconsistent. Snodgrass indicates that Jerome was aware of tradition C but considered it an intentional perversion by the Jews.²⁴ However, Richards notes that Jerome posited the possibility that tradition C was original but that Jesus' response in verse 31 had then to be understood as indignation, not explanation.²⁵

Current Scholarship

A good deal of current scholarship concerning the Parable of the Two Sons is focused on the three textual variants noted prior. However, even for those scholars who dismiss tradition C, differences in interpretation exist. Snodgrass notes that current interpretation falls largely into four buckets. First, following A. Julicher and consistent with much of historical interpretation, the parable is often understood as focusing on the relation of saying and doing to true obedience.²⁶ Second, following J. Lambrecht, some current scholars understand the second son in tradition A of the parable to represent those who originally followed Jesus but later abandoned him; the parable in this interpretation is largely Christological.²⁷ Third, following B. Scott, a small number of modern scholars argue that both sons demonstrated obedience and disobedience.²⁸ Langley notes that scholars pay little attention to tradition C, but tradition C is relevant to substantiating

22. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 89.

23. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 270.

24. *Ibid.*, 271.

25. Richards, "Another Look," 7.

26. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 270.

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*

Scott's view.²⁹ Further, as will be seen, there is merit to this view. Lastly, Snodgrass notes that some interpreters see in the two sons two different groups of Israelites, namely outcasts and religious leaders.³⁰ In some sense, then, modern scholars, with the exception of those following a line similar to B. Scott, understand the parable as displaying the dichotomy between believing and doing or saying and doing. It will be recalled that this is similar to Foster's claim regarding how the Matthean community understood the parable. This is also implied by Jeremias when he notes that the parable clearly indicates that the tax collectors and the harlots, though they originally were deaf to the word of God, repented; they, as indicated in the prior translation, first did not heed the call but then changed their minds and their changed minds were consonant with their subsequent actions.³¹ Richards echoes this same point when he notes that the parable teaches that the Israelite leaders, represented by the second son in tradition A, needed to do more than verbally assent to the father's will; they needed also to, but did not, *do* the father's will.³² There may not be, for modern scholars, consistency in the identification of whom the two sons represent or even whether the sons represent groups of individuals, but there is widespread consistency in understanding the parable as portraying obedience and disobedience (one quality in each son) through the dichotomy of believing and doing or saying and doing. As noted, though, there is some dissent. This dissent, and the variance in textual traditions, are crucial to the following proposed interpretation.

PROPOSED UNDERSTANDING

It will be recalled that (1) the problem of textual variants becomes trivial if the interpretation of the parable can remain consistent across the textual variants. (2) The interpretation of the parable can remain

29. Langley, "The Parable of the Two Sons," 231-232.

30. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 270.

31. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 125.

32. Richards, "Another Look," 12.

consistent across the textual variants if (2a) both sons are recognized as demonstrating a measure of obedience and a measure of disobedience and (2b) the full parable (vv. 28-32) teaches us that Jesus *intended* (2a) by pointing us toward a “how much more” interpretation that implies true obedience encompasses both right belief or right speech and right action. We shall consider (2a) and (2b) first, as they are the ground for the claim that interpretation can remain consistent across the textual variants.

No author reviewed herein claims that, in tradition A, the second son was not disobedient; all judge him disobedient in some measure. He did not go to the vineyard after saying that he would do so. Tradition B places the second son first, and therefore no author claims that the first son of tradition B was not disobedient. He also did not go to the vineyard after saying he would do so. The question is whether or not the first son in tradition A (the second son in tradition B) also demonstrated disobedience.³³ The short answer is that the first son in tradition A (the second son in tradition B) must have demonstrated disobedience in the eyes of Jesus’ listeners, for a first century Palestinian audience would have understood the initial answer of tradition A’s first son (tradition B’s second son) to be disrespectful and inherently disobedient to his father.³⁴ On these same grounds, we can affirm disobedience for both sons in tradition C, despite the fact that the listeners judge only the son who went to the vineyard to be disobedient. Further, we can affirm obedience on the part of all sons due either to going to the vineyard or responding to the father in an obedient manner. Thus, we can affirm 2a.

Now, Langley provides a convincing argument based on Rabbinic literature that both sons in the parable are *intended* to demonstrate both obedience and disobedience. The no/yes and yes/no response/action combinations of the two sons represent only two of four possible outcomes; the other two possibilities are, of course, yes/yes and

33. Tradition C also posits one son who consents to go to the vineyard but does not.

34. Langley, “The Parable of the Two Sons,” 242.

no/no.³⁵ This four-option structure (*qal wahomer*) is attested in Rabbinic parables, and Jesus' presentation of only two options can be understood as an "intentional refrain from completing the alternatives."³⁶ Thus, Jesus presents partial alternatives that display two sons who are neither entirely obedient nor entirely disobedient, and the presentation of only two options would allow the stifling of either seemingly mutually exclusive choice made in response to the question in verse 31. Further, though, the no/no option can be extrapolated from Jesus' explanation in verse 32 wherein the combination of lack of belief and lack of right action are applied to the group of listeners. The implication of the final option, the yes/yes option, points toward the further implied "how much more" understanding.³⁷ Thus, we have ground for claiming (2b) above, namely that the full parable (vv. 28-32) teaches us that Jesus *intended* (2a) by pointing us toward a "how much more" interpretation that implies true obedience encompasses both right belief or right speech and right action. We can now consider how (2a) and (2b) bolster the claim that, regardless of textual variant, the interpretation of the parable can remain consistent and thus the question of the originality of one textual variant is trivial.

A summation will be helpful. It will be recalled that Traditions A and B simply reverse the order of the sons in the parable. All else operates in the same manner. The choice of the son who did not go to the vineyard as the disobedient son is a natural choice from the mutually exclusive options and recognizes one aspect of disobedience. The two textual variants are consistent with the understanding above, as both obedience and disobedience are recognized. Obedience is recognized in right action and disobedience in the lack of right action. Tradition C understands the son who did go to the vineyard as disobedient, for, as

35. *Ibid.*, 236.

36. *Ibid.*, 237. Langley notes that the *qal wahomer* method can be found catalogued by Hillel, in texts earlier than Hillel (e.g. 2 Samuel 12), in the Babylonian Talmud and even in other NT passages (e.g. Matthew 12 and Luke 11) (238-241).

37. *Ibid.*, 242.

seen above, his initial negative response to his father can be understood as disrespectful and inherently disobedient. Thus, tradition C is also consistent with the understanding above, as this tradition also recognizes both obedience and disobedience. Obedience is found in right speech or right belief and disobedience in the lack of right speech or right belief. Thus, all three traditions recognize both disobedience and obedience, and all three traditions are justified in doing so. The obedience and disobedience are not in all cases consistent with one another, but the obedience and disobedience in all three traditions fit the model that draws on the *qal wahomer* tradition. Further, verse 32 in all three traditions demonstrates the no/no of the *qal wahomer* tradition when Jesus points out that the Pharisees neither believed John nor repented afterwards. The only remaining option is thus the yes/yes option, which no tradition presents but can be inferred as the unstated “how much more,” often represented but unstated in Jesus’ parables. Thus, the interpretation works with all three traditions, and, by *modus ponens*, we can validly infer that the problem of textual variants is trivial.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE PROPOSED UNDERSTANDING

The strengths of the above understanding are several. First, the question of which textual variant is original becomes a trivial question. The understanding of the parable need not change regardless of which tradition is original. Thus, our initial claim (1) supported by (1a) and (1b) can be affirmed, and we can dispense with inconsistent interpretations based on textual variants. Second, the above understanding draws on a hermeneutical principle used in the OT, the NT and Rabbinic circles (both prior to and during Jesus’ time). This establishes the understanding in a well-attested tradition on which Jesus drew. Third, the hermeneutical principle above also allows us to draw the “how much more” conclusion so prevalent in Jesus’ parables. It is certainly not necessary to draw a “how much more” conclusion from every parable, and some parables do not admit of such a conclusion;

but, the conclusion is common and, in this case, justified. Fourth, the above understanding is consistent with both Snodgrass' and Jeremias' stated intent of the parable.

As the above understanding demonstrates strengths, it likewise demonstrates weaknesses. First, the distinction drawn in the parable must ultimately be identified as a distinction between believing and doing as opposed to saying and doing, or, in the very least, the distinction must be blurred. This entails taking verses 31-32 as original, but Jeremias argues cogently that verses 31-32 are later additions. Further, it might be argued that the difference is slight, but most interpreters do draw a distinction between saying and believing. In the early twentieth century, for example, Edouard Riggenbach averred that tradition C resulted from an attempt to harmonize verses 28-30 with verses 31-32; Riggenbach noted in verses 31-32 the movement away from the saying and doing in verses 28-30.³⁸ Second, the use of the *qal wahomer* hermeneutical method is not explicit. The use of the method must be ferreted out by implication. However, this is not uncommon. Third, the textual variations, at least in terms of tradition C, may be attributable to scribal errors; therefore, a consistent interpretation that takes all textual traditions into account may not be needed.

IMPLICATIONS FOR APPLICATION

Snodgrass notes that the intent of the parable is to indicate “how far” askew the pharisaic

attitudes toward Jesus and John the Baptist are.³⁹ Jeremias notes that the intent of the parable is to display the fact that the publicans are nearer to God than the Pharisees.⁴⁰ Though the above understanding

38. J. Ramsey Michaels, “The Parable of the Regretful Son,” *Harvard Theological Review* 61 (1968): 18.

39. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 273-274.

40. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 125.

of the parable is different from both Snodgrass and Jeremias, their statements of intent are consistent with the above understanding and point to the application of the parable.

Attitudes reflect beliefs and are determinative of speech acts and actions themselves. Attitudes are informed by beliefs and motivate speech and actions. Thus, right belief results in right attitude and right attitude results in right speech and right action. Consistency is key, but consistency alone is not enough. If consistency alone were enough, then the no/no option in the *qal wahomer* hermeneutical principle would be acceptable in this case. Jesus' explanation of the Parable of the Two Sons shows us that it is not. The only acceptable option is yes/yes. Consonance between belief, attitude, speech and action are necessary, but this consonance, in the Parable of the Two Sons, must be consonance between belief in and right attitude toward Jesus and John the Baptist. Consonance between right belief and right attitude must then produce right speech and right action. Disobedience intermingled with obedience is still disobedience in some measure. How much nearer to God is one who seeks this consonance? The parable implies that the difference in nearness is comparable to the presence or lack of a gulf.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Parable of the Two Sons demonstrates, despite its brevity, widespread disagreement between interpreters. Part of this disagreement, as noted, is a function of the several received textual variants and the different interpretations that arise from the choice regarding which is original. Further, part is a function of the relation between the parable itself, verses 28 through 30, and Jesus's explanation in the subsequent verses, verses 31 through 32. Lastly, regardless of the order in which the sons are presented and especially when taking tradition C seriously, part is also a function of disagreement over which son demonstrates obedience. Thus, this brief parable, despite its simplistic appearance, has generated much debate. However, as stated at the outset, the problem of textual variants

becomes trivial because the interpretation of the parable can remain consistent across the textual variants. Consistency is achievable because both sons are recognized as demonstrating a measure of obedience and a measure of disobedience, and the full parable (vv. 28-32) teaches us that Jesus *intended* this by pointing us toward a “how much more” interpretation that implies true obedience encompasses both right belief or right speech and right action. The implied *qal wahomer* hermeneutical method in the parable helps bolster the above, and the above lets us reduce argument over the originality of the textual variations in traditions A, B and C to a triviality

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