CHAPTER FIVE

THE CHAPTER OF PARABLES

Introduction: The Chapter as a Whole

(i) The Context

The following features of the context of Mt 13 have already been identified:¹ God's messengers have been rejected; these included John the Baptist (Mt 11:7-24), and the Son of God, who brought the revelation of the Father's will (Mt 11:25-30; 12:18-21) and made fully known the moral demands of God; the rejection of the messengers took many forms: refusal to hear, persecution of the messengers, and the demand for attestation. The result of that rejection will be condemnation at the Day of Judgment (Mt 11:21-24; 12:38-45). Acceptance of God's agents, on the other hand, brings blessing and renewal; it carries responsibilities: mercy and humanitarian concern (Mt 12:7,9-13), a change of heart and incorporation into God's family (Mt 12:46-50. All this is possible through the protection of the Spirit (Mt 12:25-32,43-45), without whom the powers of evil gain (Mt 12:33-35), or regain (Mt 12:43-45),² their hold. Rejection or acceptance, success in resisting evil or failure are of ultimate significance, for everyone, even for those who acknowledge the Son and the Kingdom, because judgment at the Last Day will be according to words and deeds (Mt 12:37); and all these features together relate to the responsibilities and privileges of being a disciple of the Kingdom (Mt 13:52).³

This context for Mt 13 is the result of a juxtaposition of Marcan and Q material, the Marcan material providing the main outline. So the Matthean editor's use of Mk 3:22-35 concludes with Mt 12:46-50, and the following verse, Mk 4:1/Mt 13:1, begins the chapter of parables without a decisive literary break to separate that chapter from its preceding context.⁴

¹ pp.269, 111-113.
² pp.270-272.
³ p.208.
⁴ Major treatments of Mt 13 are: Bornkamm, Enderwartung, 13-47 (I have supplemented this by notes from his Heidelberg lectures); Cope, Matthew, 15-31; Davies, Matthew II; Dupont, Paraboles, 221-259; Gerhardsson, Parables, 16-37; Gundry, Handbook, 250-282; Hagner, Matthew, I 361-407; Kingsbury, Parables; Luz, Matthäus, 1/2 291-378; Wilkens, Redaktion.
(ii) The redaction
The most important aspects of the redaction of Mt 13 are:

1. The Old Testament Quotations
A fuller form of Isa 6:9ff is given in Mt 13:14ff than is found in Mk 4:12. This fuller form is capable of a number of different interpretations within the Matthean context. It could be understood as a strengthening or a modification of a Marcan 'hardening theory', or as a challenge to that theory. Much depends on how the Marcan 'hardening theory' is to be understood. If the Marcan is understood as a hardening of everyone except the inner group of the disciples, then the view that Matthew challenges such a theory has much to commend it, particularly because Mt 13:35 (Diff Mk), the quotation from Ps 77:2, is best understood as a public declaration of God's mysteries for all the crowds. The repetition and emphatic position of ἐν παραβολαῖς in 13:34,35, the Verb ἔρευξομαι in 13:35 which lends itself to public proclamation, and the omission from Mt 13:34 of the

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5 On the textual question, see Stendahl, School, 130-131; Lindars, Apologetic, 155 n.2; Cope, Matthew, 18; Davies, Matthew, I 32-58; Gundry, Matthew, 116ff; Prabhu, Quotations, 31-35; Rothfuchs, Erfüllungszitate, 23-24; Stanton, Gospel, ch. 15. Stendahl treats the exact agreement of the quotation in Matthew with Acts 28:26ff and the unusual character of the formula citation as evidence of a post-Matthean interpolation (see also McConnell, Law, 142; Davies, Matthew, I 51; Prabhu, Quotations, 35). The main objections to the longer text illustrate the inadequacies of contemporary redactional method: a pattern is established to which redaction should correspond, and the features which do not appear to fit with that pattern can then be questioned textually, without serious text-critical support; for some answers to Stendahl, see van Segbroek, Citations, 126-128; Trilling, Wahre Israel, 60 n.18; Cerfau, La connaissance. See Luz, Matthäus, 1/1 138 n.27. On the type of text used by Matthew, see Gundry, Use, and Luz, Matthäus, 1/1 137 n.21; Davies, Matthew, I 33-57 (13:13 is classified as Mt against Mk, both against LXX); Marbury, Texttypes, provides some of the material for which Davies and Allison are asking, as does Graham Davies (see p.10 n.6).

6 Gnilka, Verstockungsproblem, 119ff; Wilkens, Redaktion, 305ff, treats ὁ τι (13:13) as giving the ground why the Jews do not understand.

7 van Elderen, Matthew 13; Filson, Matthew, 158-60; Flusser, Gleichnisse, 253ff.

8 See Hooker, Mark, 125-139, who makes three points: 1) that Mark shares the view that Israel's obduracy is to be attributed to God; 2) that although the Twelve are contrasted with 'those outside' the distinction is not rigid, since it is a matter of who responds to Jesus' invitation; 3) that there are some surprises about who responds and who does not. See Räisänen, Parabeltheorie, 8ff. For a full bibliography, see Schürmann, Lukasevangelium, 458 n.97. Mt 15:7ff is not sound evidence for a 'hardening theory' in Matthew. Its use of parable and parabolic interpretation encourages repentance.