CHAPTER SIX
PARABLES AND MARCAN CONTEXTS

In addition to the Marcan parables treated in the previous chapter, and those included in the eschatological discourse, there are four sections in Matthew’s Gospel which embody parables from Marcan contexts: the opening of the Sermon on the Mount, chs. 9 and 15, and the chapters surrounding the parable of The Tenants.

A. Salt and Light Mt 5:13-16

(i) The Context
This first parabolic saying appears in both Mark and Q. Its Matthean context in Matthew is the Sermon on the Mount, for which the saying provides a summary headline. The structure of the Sermon on the Mount appears to be as follows: the Beatitudes set out the qualities, privileges and suffering of those who fulfil the divine will (5:1-12);2 these latter glorify God in the world (5:13-16)3 through a righteousness greater than any known before, because it is based on the teaching of Jesus Christ (5:17-20).4 From the beginning (5:13b) failure is seen to be possible. Christ however calls for a perfection, a perfection through the providence of God which is greater than that made possible by Moses (5:21-5:48),5 in both moral and cultic matters.6 Christ promises a reward for those whose life and worship express a humble confidence in God (Mt 6:1-34);7 they are to be concerned with the Kingdom and the righteousness which consists in doing the Father’s will (7:1-26).8 5:13-16 occupies a key position in that structure. It gathers up the significance of the Beatitudes and announces that in their fulfilment God is

1 Kissinger, Sermon; Hagner, Matthew, I 98.
2 Przybylski, Righteousness, 96-115; Bühl, Demut, 217-223.
3 Viviano, Worship, 217-223.
4 Ogawa, L’histoire, ch. 4; Sigal, Halakah, 192.
5 Wrege, Überlieferung, 57ff; Piper, Love your Enemies, 142-152; major questions have been raised against Meier, Law and History, ch. 3.
6 Jeremias, Lass allda, 270-275; Davies, Sermon, 93ff; Marguerat, Matthieu, 142-167.
7 Viviano, Worship, 99ff; Riesenfeld, Parâneese, 47ff.
8 Luz, Matthew, I 407ff.
glorified throughout the world. Together the Beatitudes and 5:13-16 provide an opening for the first discourse and balance the conclusion of the last discourse; they correspond to the declaration at the Last Judgment of the standard of judgment for all the world (Mt 25:31-46).

(ii) The Redaction
The phrases τὸ ἀλας τῆς γῆς, τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου (Mt 5:13, 14; see also 5:16) correspond to the universal vision of 25:31-46. Mt 5:13-14 is probably a Matthean formulation; the doublet ‘You are the salt...You are the light’ in Mt 5:13-14 depends on the Genitives for the distinctive character of its predicative form (contrast Lk 14:34f and Mk 9:50): “You are salt before the world; you are light before the world.” They are a Matthean construction, providing a significant structural feature for chs. 5-25.

1) You are salt...
The salt metaphor strengthens this structural feature. The reference to salt in Mt 5:13 develops the Mark and Q ‘salt’ traditions. Mark has a question-

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9 Schlatter, Matthäus, 150f.
10 Davies, Sermon, 249ff.
11 Carlston, Triple Tradition, ch. 2; Theissen, Soziologie, 176-179.
12 Schulz, Q, 470; Souček, Salz, 174.
13 γῆ Schenk, Sprache, 110; Gundry, Matthew, 642; Neirynck, Vocabulary, 226; Bergemann, Prüfstand, 89-90.

Mt 43x: 20x No Par; 10x Par Mk; 4x Par Lk; 5x Diff Lk
2x No Par or Diff Lk; 2x No Par or Diff Mk

Mk 19x: 10x Par Mt; 3x Diff Mt; 1x >*; 5x >

Lk 25x: 13x No Par; 5x Par Mk; 4x Par Mt; 2x Diff Mt; 1x Diff Mk

Mt 43x can be broken down into areas of meaning:
1) Opposite to sea=land: 2x Par Mk
2) Ground=soil: 4x Par Mk
3) Ground=beneath our feet: 1x Par Mk; 2x No Par; 2x Diff Lk
4) Land=geographical or tribal area: 6x No Par; 1x No Par or Diff Mk; 1x Diff Lk
5) Earth=natural, physical world: 1x No Par (27:51)
6) Earth=place of change and decay: 1x No Par (6:19); 1x Par Mk (27:45)
7) Earth=opposite to heaven above: 8x No Par; 2x Par Mk; 2x Par Lk; 1x No Par or Diff Lk
8) Earth=inhabited earth: 2x No Par or Diff Lk (5:5,13); 2x Par Lk (10:34; 12:42); 1x No Par (17:25); 1x No Par; Diff Mk (24:30)

9) Earth=with mythical associations 1x Diff Lk
14 The Genitives are probably to be read in the context of vv13c and 16: ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν. See Davies, Sermon, 249-251; for alternatives, see Goulder, Midrash, 255; Schwarz, Emendation, 80ff.