J. G. du Plessis: Pragmatic meaning in Matthew 13:1-23*

ABSTRACT
Matthew 13:1-23 is analysed with the help of the pragmatic principles formulated by G. N. Leech. The analysis is performed within W. Schmid's scheme of narrative roles. The intended effect (pragmatic force) of the discourse is the strengthening of the interpersonal relationship between Jesus and his disciples. The stress is on Jesus as the dominant partner in this relationship. The disciples (and the readers) are urged to adhere in a dependent attitude to Jesus. In this way they become part of the future success of the kingdom. The remarks about the purpose of the parables can only be understood against this background. They are a foil used by Jesus to illuminate the relationship between himself and his disciples.

INTRODUCTION
We may distinguish between two categories of meaning: meaning as "sense" and pragmatical meaning. The distinction between the two becomes clear in the following everyday remark: "I understand what you are saying, but I do not know why you are saying it." This remark presupposes a literal or verbal meaning of the utterance (the "sense") and the purpose and effect of the remark (the pragmatic meaning).

In the following I am primarily concerned with the pragmatic meaning, which we may define more accurately with Leech (1983:6) as "the study of meaning in speech situations." In order to grasp the pragmatic meaning of utterances or of a whole discourse it is necessary to read between the lines. What is not said in so many words is often of much greater importance from a pragmatic point of view than what is actually uttered. What is "between the lines" may be called the implicatures of an utterance or of a discourse (Grice 1975:50; Van Coller & Van Rensburg 1984:87). Leech (1983:30) uses the term implicature in a wider sense to include inference (logical deduction) as well.

Fortunately we are today in a position to "read between the lines" in a much more systematic and controlled way than before. This is the result of philosophical and linguistic research concerned with the so-called "speech act theory" (cf. Austin 1962; Grice 1975; Searle 1974 1979; Van Coller & Van Jaarsveld 1984). Speech act theory has been introduced to parable research by Thiselton (1970); and subsequently Aurelio (1977) and Arens (1982) have developed some of the speech act themes with respect to parabolic theory and interpretation. In the following analysis I
will make use of Leech's (1983) extension of speech act theory, which I shall briefly outline at the outset.

1 LEACH'S PRINCIPLES OF PRAGMATICS
According to Leech (1983:17) the pragmatic meaning of an utterance is found by computing two "forces" which are present in all utterances. These two forces can be related to two different types of goals which every addressee has in saying or writing something. On the one hand we have the motivation to make the utterance, the reason for communicating and on the other hand we have the social goals of the utterance (Leech 1983:17).

The motivation behind an utterance is called the illocutionary goal. For example, somebody may shout: "Beware!". The illocutionary goal is then that someone must be warned against a specific danger. Leech (1983:14, 15) also talks of the illocutionary force of an utterance: "When we try to work out the meaning of an utterance, this can be thought of as an attempt to reconstruct what act, considered as a goal-directed communication, was it a goal of the speaker to perform in producing the utterance. Thus the meaning of an utterance, in this sense, can be called its ILLOCUTIONARY FORCE."

Applied to our example it means that the speaker alerts the addressee by using an utterance with a "warning force".

A speaker also has certain social goals when he makes an utterance. These goals are responsible for keeping the conversation going once it has started so that the speaker keeps his audience listening until he has finished saying what he intends to communicate. These social goals must also ensure that the audience is afterwards willing to execute the illocutionary goal of the speaker. Leech (1983:17) maintains that these social goals are "regulative factors which ensure that, once conversation is underway, it will not follow a fruitless or disruptive path".

Leech (1983:16) distinguishes two types of social goals which he describes with the terms "inter-personal rhetoric" and "textual rhetoric". Together these two rhetorics produce the rhetorical force of an utterance or conversation. Leech (1983:17) defines the rhetorical force as "the meaning it conveys regarding s's (= the speaker's - JG du P) adherence to rhetorical principles (e.g. how far is s being truthful, polite, ironic)".

Let us look more closely at the social goals of utterances and conversations which are co-responsible for the pragmatic force of the utterance. The two rhetorics which form the rhetorical force may be schematized as follows:
In the textual rhetoric the principle of processibility has to do with the ease with which the message may be deciphered within a linear time span. Clarity entails the unambiguous use of syntax and phonology of the language in order to construct the text. The principle of economy requires the avoidance of excessive brevity or repetition. The aesthetic aspect of a text is covered by the expressivity principle.

The importance of Leech's contribution does not lie on the level of the textual rhetoric, but on that of the inter-personal rhetoric. He distinguishes between the cooperative principle (described earlier by Grice 1975), the politeness principle (Leech's most important addition to the theory) and the irony principle, to name only the three most important ones.

The cooperative principle consists of the following maxims: The maxim of quantity which regulates that the speaker should give his audience enough information; the maxim of quality which rules that the speaker should be honest in his opinions; the maxim of relation which stipulates that the speaker should advance his own and the audience's goals with his utterance; the maxim of manner stipulates that the speaker's utterance should give a clear indication of its illocutionary force. Leech (1983:42) gives a more adequate description of relation and manner than Grice in the above exposition.

The politeness principle is analysed by Leech (1983:132) as follows: The tact maxim requires the speaker to say something that minimises the cost to the other or conversely that maximises the benefit to the other; the generosity maxim requires minimal benefit to self or maximum cost to self; the approbation maxim requires minimal dispraise of other or maximum praise of other; the modesty maxim requires minimal praise of self or maximum dispraise of other; the agreement maxim requires minimum disagreement between self and other or maximum agreement between self and other; the sympathy maxim requires minimum antipathy between self and other or maximum sympathy between self and other. It should be obvious that cultural conditioning plays a very important role in the politeness principle.

The illocutionary force in combination with the rhetorical force creates the pragmatic force of an utterance: illocutionary force + rhetorical force = pragmatical force. The pragmatical force is the intended effect of the utterance.

The pragmatical force is represented by a set of implicatures (Leech 1983:30). These implicatures are the deductions made from the way in which the addressee keeps to or flouts the principles of textual and inter-personal rhetoric. The important instances are often those in which the principles are flouted. Usually this leads to compensation by
one of the others. In this zigzag manner we are enabled "to read between the lines".

Leech (1983:40) sees the process as one of heuristic analysis. Hypotheses are formed and checked against the available evidence. New hypotheses are formed and so on. It must be stressed that the formulation of implicatures are probabilistic by nature: "We cannot ultimately be certain what a speaker means by an utterance . . . Interpreting an utterance is ultimately a matter of guesswork, or (to use a more dignified term) hypothesis formation" (Leech 1983:30).

Stripped of all the terminology Leech's (and Grice's) contribution boils down to a new awareness of the social goals of conversation. Our attention is focused on the fact that the expectations of the listener plays a constitutive role in the establishment of the meaning of an utterance. Meaning, in fact, comes into being in the relation between addressee and addressee. We are also encouraged to discover the world of meaning between the lines in the text.

2 SCHMID'S SCHEME OF NARRATIVE ROLES

I have chosen to do a pragmatic analysis of Mt. 13:1-23 within the framework of Schmid's (1973) exposition of the narrative roles of a text. According to Schmid (1973:29) the textual communication of a narrative occurs between a real (concrete) author and a real (concrete) recipient. The recipient is an addressee who actually reads the narrative. The narrative itself consists of an abstract author which is the organising principle of the whole narrative and an implied or ideal reader. The implied reader is not a person but the sum total of directions given by the text for the ideal reception of the narrative. The abstract author organises the text in such a way that there is a narrator telling the story to a listener/reader. This listener/reader may be explicitly mentioned or may be absent. The narrator tells of characters who act and speak within the narration itself. The following diagram represents the narrative roles (cf. Schmid 1973:29):
means more or less equal to. There is a relationship between the concrete author and the abstract author, but it is not scientifically controllable.

The addressee is the one to whom the narrative is directed. When he "realises" the work, he becomes the recipient (Van Coller 1983: 114).
Applied to the gospel of Matthew, the abstract author is the total textual organisation of Matthew. When we speak of "Matthew says . . ." and we do not mean the historical author, we are talking about the abstract author. The implied reader is the prescribed reader's role which, when followed properly, will do justice to the abstract author's ordering of the text. The narrator in Matthew is the omnipresent and omniscient voice telling the story. In contrast with Luke (but like Mark) there is no explicit ("fictive") reader mentioned in Matthew. Jesus, the disciples and the adversaries are all characters in this narrative. Jesus is the narrated author-narrator of a parable like the Sower.

In the exposition of Matthew 13:1-23 I will not pay attention to the concrete author and the concrete recipient of the text. This is done to keep the analysis within manageable proportions. Let us now proceed to the actual exposition.

3  MATTHEW 13:1-51
The parable of the Sower is told in Matthew against the backdrop of the remark that Jesus "used parables to tell them many things" (Mt. 13:3). Immediately after this remark the parable of the sower is told.

The sower is a probable stereotype for God (cf. Brouwer 1946:58ff., Flusser 1981:44-6). The whole parable is ruled by the conflict between harvest-producing agents and agents endangering a harvest. The seed and the good earth are obvious agents which are favourable to a harvest. The path, the birds, the rocky ground, the sun, the thorns are all in the world of the parable agents counter-productive to a harvest. The sower sows thrice on terrain unfavourable to a harvest. This reflects on his behaviour and makes him a dubious agent in the constellation of harvest-producing factors. Eventually he sows the seed on land which is in itself favourable to a successful harvest and so he is established as a harvest-producing agent. The action in the parable is constituted by the opposition: Task - task accomplished. The task is evidently to effect a harvest. The opposition harvest-producing vs. harvest-failure is thus the opposition constituting the structure of the parable's action (cf. Link 1979:268).

In the end the task is successfully accomplished. At the beginning certain requirements for the production of a harvest were not fulfilled. Seed was sown on unproductive land and exposed to antagonistic agents. When all the harvest-producing agents are brought together, namely, sower, good land and seed, the requirements for a harvest are not simply re-established. There is a surplus. The extraordinary abundance results from the absence of any conflict on the good land.
The parable presents two possible perspectives. In the sequence of the narrative the tracts of land producing failures create the impression of being in the centre of attention, occupying the largest area of the land. From the perspective of the end it becomes evident that the unproductive tracts are peripheral, a sign, not of the sower’s waste of good seed, endangering the eventual harvest, but of the spilling of the superfluous. The harvest is so assured that there is more seed available than that needed for the sowing area of assured success (cf. Du Plessis 1977:39ff.).

The implied reader of the gospel is introduced through this parable to a vision of the sower as someone who is assured of eventual success. Seed are exposed to unfavourable land, but this can in no way affect the eventual harvest.

The implied reader as well as the narrated addressees of the gospel is actively provoked to question the relevance of this narrative and the meaning of the narrative at its literal level for the situation as it is depicted in the gospel. The telling of the parable acts as a prime or a catalyst. The cooperative principle of inter-personal rhetoric becomes an issue. It is the maxims of quantity and relation which are at stake, as well as the textual principle of clarity: How is this story relevant to the goals of Jesus, the disciples and the others and how should the images in it be decoded?

The importance of deciphering the message of the parable is underlined by Jesus’ authoritative concluding remark: ὁ ἔχων ὅτα ἔκπνεύει (Mt. 13:9). With this remark Jesus in fact flouts the politeness principle. The telling of the parable in itself constitutes a flouting of the cooperative principle. The authoritative concluding remark stresses the importance of the message to the reader and the narrated audience, but flagrantly flouts the tact maxim of the politeness principle. Although lacking the explicit directions with which to decode the message, the addressees are nevertheless ordered to understand. The authoritative concluding remark is an impositive and intrinsically competitive with the social goal of the discourse (Leech 1983:106). A belief is expressed which expresses or implies cost to the other — that is the addressee (cf. Arndt & Gingrich 1971:31 who describe the phrase as: “A challenge to the hearers, by which their attention is drawn to a special difficulty.”).

From the disciples’ question (v. 10) we can infer that Jesus did not teach them only by means of parables. Their question concerning Jesus’ use of parables in his conversation with the others is a question concerning the flouting of the cooperative principle and the politeness principle in the inter-personal rhetoric between Jesus and his addressees who are not disciples. There is a twofold deliberate disruption
in the conversation between Jesus and the others. Two principles of inter-personal rhetoric are flouted: The choice of the telling of the parable and the subsequent hortatory remark signal this challenge in communication.

The difference in Jesus’ treatment of the disciples and the rest lies in the fact that the politeness principle is not flouted in the same way. The disciples fear an implicature of the flouting of the politeness principle with the others, namely that this breakdown in communication with the others is going to cost them (the disciples) something in one way or another. Their own prospects as followers of Jesus are going to be diminished because the success of his conduct is questionable. In any case, their question implies that they at least expect to be given the correction of the cooperative principle in order to decode the parable correctly. They differ from the others in that they go to Jesus with their perplexity.

At this stage it is worthwhile recognising the parallels between what is told in the parable of the *Sower* and what is happening in the interpersonal communication between Jesus and his addressees. In the parable the protagonist is depicted as having a task to accomplish, the bringing about of a harvest. Initially, by sowing on terrain which is unfavourable to the seed and the eventual harvest, he fails in his task. The task is only accomplished when he sows the seed on terrain favourable to a harvest. Jesus, in telling the parable and concluding it with the hortatory remark, is not fulfilling the requirements for successful communication on the level of inter-personal rhetoric. “Cooperation and politeness, for instance, are largely regulative factors which ensure that, once conversation is underway, it will not follow a fruitless or disruptive path” (Leech 1983: 17). The communicative process between Jesus and his narrated addressees as well as the implied reader is disrupted and threatens to become fruitless because of the flouting of the various principles of interpersonal rhetoric. What is the implicature of these floutings? Is the narrator of the parable of the sower, Jesus, behaving in the same way as the sower in the narrative? Where is the good earth? Is it possible to draw an analogy from the parable to the speech situation in which it is told? How and when will successful communication then be assured? If the image of the sower is indeed a stereotype for God giving his law, the parable is placed within the context of a proclamation model (cf. again Delorme 1979:183 – the *Sower* tells of all forms of teaching). At this stage it is not yet clear what is proclaimed (although the indication is that it is the kingdom), but it is evident that the parable in some way or other foreshadows what is taking place in the telling of the parable to the various addressees. If the
pattern of the parable is followed in the speech act of the telling of the parable, the successful accomplishment of the task should follow at some time or another. Jesus’ reply to his disciples indicates that they are the analogy to the good soil. The reasonableness of the above assumptions is substantiated for instance by Marin’s (1982:104-26) structuralist exposition.

By replying to his disciples that they have been given the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven (v. 11), the conversation between Jesus and the disciples is saved from its disruptive path. Instead of stating something which maximises the cost to the other (flouting the politeness principle maxim of tact), Jesus is maximising the benefit to the other (i.e. the disciples as his addressees). As the implied reader is eavesdropping on the conversation with the narrated addressees, the inference is that the implied reader too is included in the rectification of the disruptive path the conversation between the abstract author and the implied reader had taken. It is interesting to note that the repair of the disruption follows the inverse order followed by the disruption. The repair of the cooperative principle (v. 18) follows that of the repair of the politeness principle (v. 11).

At the same time that the disruption of the conversation is repaired between Jesus and the disciples, he affirms the breach with the others, who do not receive the secrets of the kingdom. The disruption of the conversation with the others is affirmed as a rhetorical goal of the narrated narrator, Jesus. Jesus’ action in disrupting the conversation with the others is presented as having its foundation in the action of God Himself. Δέδοται as passive is a circumscription for the divine name (Gnilka 1961:91).

By supporting his method of proclamation with recourse to the will of God, Jesus defends himself and affirms the eventual success of his method of proclamation as well as confirms that the breakdown in communication between himself and the others is deliberate and not due to failure on his part.

The remark in verse eleven about the divine origin of the revelation (or the lack of it) is followed in verse twelve by the crucial adage: ὅστις γὰρ ἐχει, δοθήσεται αὐτῷ καὶ περισσευθήσεται; ὅστις δὲ οὐκ ἔχει, καὶ οὐ̄ ἔχει, ἀρθήσεται ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ. The same adage is found in the mouth of the master in the Talents. According to Gnilka (1961:92) the remark can have one of two meanings: “Entweder beschreibe die Wegnahme des letzten Gutes die Auswirkung des οὗ δέδοται – dabei sei diese Verarmung nicht durch die Parabelreden, sondern durch den Unglauben der Menge verursacht –, oder der Spruch sei wegen des verknüpfenden erläuternden Wiederholung des Verses 11.” Gnilka’s (1961:92) conclusion is that
it is the first and he then argues that it is demonstrated that God does not arbitrarily reveal to some and not to others, but that the reason for the revelation to some and the lack of it to others is found in the possibilities some people present to God.

Interpreted within the communicative situation of Jesus and his disciples, the remark describes the fact that the disciples, who have already received some of the mysteries of the kingdom, will receive even more. The others who lack the mysteries of the kingdom will not get the opportunity to receive more. In fact they will have less and less access to the mysteries of the kingdom. The stark contrast between the various tracts of land in the Sower is mirrored in this adage. The unproductive soil delivered no harvest at all, whereas the good soil produced an abundant harvest. This adage in verse twelve further cements the inter-personal relationship between Jesus and his disciples. The tact maxim - maximising benefit to the other - and the approbation maxim - maximising praise of the other - are utilised. At the same time Jesus signals the intention of even greater disruption of communication between himself and the others. The implied reader of the gospel is forced into trying to understand the purpose of this intended flouting of the principles of interpersonal rhetoric.

The adage in verse twelve refers to the initial lack existing in those denied the mysteries of the kingdom. In this respect Gnilka (see above) is correct. But the adage also states that the initial situation of the others will in fact become worse. What had been "cause" is going to become an effect. Once again Jesus is defending his proclamation. The breakdown in the communication with the others is intended: they get what they deserve. Their own lack of comprehension is not the final cause of their "Verarmung", for the deliberate withholding of the mysteries of the kingdom is going to cause their situation to deteriorate.

Jesus directs the disciples' attention not to the cause for the giving of the mysteries to some and the withholding of it from others; but he focuses on the effect of the revelation or the lack of it. The adage is in effect a promise to the disciples even as it is an indirect warning to the others. The disciples are assured of the eventual fruition of the proclamation of the kingdom in their lives. These are the illocutionary forces of the adage.

In the following verse (13) Jesus reiterates that the others lack comprehension and that that is the reason why he is speaking to them in parables. He uses the causal because to introduce the first of his two quotations (Gnilka 1961:93; Ridderbos 1962:127). It reaffirms his intention of disrupting the communication between himself and the others.
Combined with the previous verse's warning that the lack of comprehension will result in even greater deprivation, the inference can be made that the telling of the parables will result in even greater incomprehension. It is pointless therefore to argue whether there is a fundamental pragmatical difference between Matthew on the one hand and Mark and Luke on the other hand, who introduce their quotation with an alleged final ἔως. In all instances the result in the others' condition will be the same. This point was already made by Plummer (1909, referred to by Brouwer 1946:105).

Jesus, by adding the partial quotation from Isaiah (v. 13) makes explicit reference to the Scriptures. Gnilka (1961:93) mentions that the quotation not only refers to Isaiah 6:9-10, but that it also shows similarities with Ezechiel 12:2 and Jeremiah 5:21. Jesus is defending his habit of speaking to the others by means of parables, not only with recourse to the will of God (v. 11), but also by demonstrating that there is a precedent for his behaviour in the past dealings of God with his people (viz. Vorster 1977:134).

The statement in verse thirteen pointedly differs from Jesus' previous two remarks. It omits any reference to the disciples and their situation, while informing the disciples about the others.

The next, full quotation from the LXX version of Isaiah 6:9-10 also omits any mention of the disciples' circumstances and concentrates solely on informing them about the others' lack of comprehension. A new element however is introduced: apart from the incomprehension of the others, they are also unwilling (ἐπαχύνθη, ἐκάμμωσαν) to understand. This, second, quotation is explicitly introduced as a prophecy of Isaiah's. The ἀναπληρώται with which it is introduced means simply "fulfil" (Arndt & Gingrich 1971:59 vs. Grosheide 1954:213). The claim is made that that prophecy is being fulfilled by Jesus' use of the parables in preaching to the others. Isaiah's message was, as proclamation, a message of judgement and ordeal. It was understood as such in the time to which the gospel refers, even if the LXX and rabbinical witnesses give evidence of a somewhat milder interpretation (Gnilka 1961:48-9). It is judgement and punishment that are being fulfilled by means of the proclamation in parables.

The question which has engaged research is whether this negative purpose of Jesus is irrevocable or not. Before I discuss this issue, let us first summarise the conversation between Jesus and his disciples up to this point.

In the first place Jesus has maintained and strengthened an interpersonal, non-antagonistic relationship which is beneficial to the disciples. This is the rhetorical force of the conversation with the
disciples. The illocutionary force of these utterances is commissive, that is, Jesus, the speaker, commits himself to some future action in the interests of the disciples. They will receive more. At the same time the utterances in the conversation have asserted that Jesus’ way of proclaiming the kingdom by means of parables is intended by God. Jesus’ mission is in no way risked or endangered by the breakdown in communication with the others, due to the speaking in parables. The disciples may therefore be encouraged by the favourable position in which they find themselves and they may trust in the future of the mission of Jesus and in his proclamation. The illocutionary force of the conversation is – in Leech’s terms (Leech 1983:104) – convivial to the social goal. The analogy of Jesus’ proclamation to the parable of the Sower is important. Just as the sower is a dubious figure within the configuration of harvest-producing agents by sowing on infertile areas, so Jesus’ behaviour is perplexing because of the apparent ineffectiveness of his proclamation to the others. Just as the success of the eventual harvest fully justifies the sower’s behaviour and demonstrated the irrelevancy of the failures on the areas unsuitable for the harvest, Jesus justifies himself by the promise (explicit in vv. 11, 12 and implicit in vv. 13, 14-15 and again explicit in vv. 16-17, still to be discussed) and the assurance to the disciples of their God-ordained favour. In the imagery of the parable: there will be a harvest and the disciples are part of that eventual harvest.


The meaning of the Sower as it emerges from the conversation that follows the telling of the parable includes both Jeremias’s and Eichholz’s views: The lack of success, mentioned by Jeremias, belongs to the signs of insignificance, regarded by Eichholz as the very signs of the coming of the kingdom. This affirmation then becomes a comforting ground for new hope.

The pragmatical force of Jesus’ conversation with his disciples is then: The disciples should accept the way in which Jesus is proclaiming the kingdom by means of parables. They may trust that the success of the proclamation will outweigh the apparent failure by far. They may
hope to receive more. They may experience security because God is acting in their favour.

It is interesting to note that there is only one directive in the whole passage, the hortatory remark imploring the addressees to listen in verse nine which concludes the parable of the Sower. The rest of the illocutionary forces are – in so far as the disciples are addressed – convivial to the social goal and to comity between Jesus and the disciples. The directive, which is intrinsically opposed to comity, ironically had the perlocution that the disciples came to Jesus with their question concerning the use of the parables.

It is obvious that there are implied threats to the others in the conversation. As yet this knowledge of the threatening character of the parabolic discourse is only imparted to the disciples – a further example of the compliance with the social goal (the politeness principle) of favouring the disciples. The implied threats to the others are stated four times (vv. 11, 12, 13, 14-15). This is a transgression of the textual principle of economy. The implication of this is that the contrast between the two groups is important. The disciples already know what the contrast is, but the others do not. This implies the question: Will the others at some time or another realize the contrast? When will they recognize the preaching in parables, not merely as perplexing, but as the execution of judgement? Or are they going to sink into complete apathy?

Those questions are implied by the text, long before the issue of the finality of the others' incomprehension and unwillingness to listen becomes relevant. It should be obvious that the present incomprehension and unwillingness are willed, both by God and Jesus. Its duration or the possible finality does not lie within the scope of the conversation. The conversation is directed not to the others, but to the disciples in order to defend Jesus' behaviour as God ordained, as effective proclamation of the kingdom, and to give the disciples the necessary perspective on their own situation. The issue must not be confused by assuming that accepting the parables as God-ordained judgement on the others necessarily entails that this situation must be accepted as the final state of affairs. The conversation is simply not concerned with the issue of the conversion or non-conversion of the others.

The disciples, when confronted with incomprehension (lack of understanding of Jesus' teaching by means of parables), turned to him for enlightenment.

In their case the incomprehension resulted in a closer relationship and a more intimate knowledge of the way God acts through Jesus. For them the breakdown in communication caused by Jesus' use of the
parables to the others induced an enriched relationship with Jesus. This is the proper reaction to the use of the parables. Jesus’ disciples’ use of the parables intensifies the disciples’ dependence on him for guidance and enlightenment. This conversation illustrates how in principle parable and ensuing conversation are conceived as a unity. They belong structurally together as parts of the same process of interpersonal rhetoric.

Matthew represents the disciples as reacting to the fact that the parables will remain obscure to the others: “Unbegreiflich und anstößig erscheinen hier den Jüngern die Lehren Jesu nicht deshalb, weil sie das Gleichnis nicht verstehen, sondern weil das Volk es nicht versteht” (Schlatter 1935:96, quoted by Gnilka 1961:103). The fact that they are given an interpretation by Jesus, allows though for the inference that they themselves have not grasped the relevance of the parable. What is indisputable is that the imagery of the parable, the parable by its very nature, induces the ongoing illuminating conversation between Jesus and the disciples (Mt. 13:18-23). One should therefore not conclude from the way in which the disciples’ reaction is phrased that the disciples understood the parable(s). The disciples’ enquiry is caused by the fact that they know/perceive that the parable is all that the others are going to get. This does not exclude that they expect to get information on both the reason for the use of parables as well as the meaning of the parable(s).

The use of the parables makes the process of understanding problematical for the disciples, critical in the case of the others. In the event of a problematical communication process, a possible solution is to enquire from the sender what the purpose or meaning could be. This brings the addressee and the sender together in a relationship in which the addressee is dependent on the sender for the clarification of the message.

The common denominator between the effect of the telling of the parables to both disciples and the others is the focus on and the actual dependence on the narrated narrator, Jesus. He is able to direct and influence the course of events. In the ever-increasing incomprehension of the others, because of the use of the parables, the intentional obscurity of the narrator, Jesus, becomes more and more evident. In the proclamation to the disciples, the obscurity of the parables creates the possibility for Jesus to engage with the disciples in a conversation which stresses their dependence on him as the revealer. The parables are used to stimulate enquiry from Jesus.

Gnilka (1961:92) proposes the following reason for the use of the parables to others: “Gott richtet sich im Austeilen seiner Gaben auch
nach dem Menschen, nach den Möglichkeiten, die der Mensch ihm bietet oder versagt" (with reference to Mt. 13:12). In the light of our discussion it is more appropriate to say that the parables are used to reveal to man his lack of possibilities and to persuade him to focus on the one from whom possible guidance can come. This conclusion is reached, not on the basis of what is explicitly said by Jesus about the teaching by means of parables, but by way of inference and implication from the process of communication as it developed between Jesus and the disciples up to this point.

In the light of the preceding discussion the quotation in Matthew 13:14-15 becomes accessible. The interpretation hinges on the τοῦτο, in verse fifteen. Arndt and Gingrich (1971:521) interpret this conjunction as well as the one in Mark 4:11 as "denoting purpose, (in order) that . . . not, oft. expressing apprehension." This is the interpretation followed by the Nuwe Afrikaanse Bybel. On the other hand the Today's English Version and the Gute Nachricht 1971 translate: "Otherwise" and "Sonst" respectively. This weaker interpretation is possible (Gnilka 1961:48) and is preferred by many exegetes (see Gnilka 1961:48 for references), especially in the case of Mark 4:11 which shows dependence on the Targum. It is even possible to translate it as "perhaps". The interpretation of this important conjunction makes a considerable difference to the meaning of the passage. If Arndt and Gingrich are followed the purpose of the parables is to prevent conversion.

The weaker version adopted by the Today's English Version and the Gute Nachricht means that had the people comprehended and been willing to understand, they would have received the message by means of the parables and their insight and willingness would have enabled them to turn to God and be healed. This weaker version does not alter the result of the people's attitude. With or without the explicit intention of God, the people will not become converted. The stronger or the weaker phrasing of the situation of the people does not alter the essential view on their situation. It is (merely) a question of the softer or harsher way of delivering the message. In other words, it has to do with the way in which the speaker assures that the conversation, "once it is under way", will not "follow a disruptive path" (Leech 1983:17). It is specifically the tact maxim which is the issue. Cost is minimized/maximized to the other (the addressee) depending on which of the two forms is used. The weaker version considers the feelings of the people more than the other does.

We have seen in Matthew (as in the other gospels as well) that the people are not addressed with these quotations, but the disciples are.
This makes the adherence to the tact maxim in this respect questionable. It is not the recipient who benefits or not by the remark.

The question remains whether the others are not part of the intended addressees. Leech (1983:131) noted that the "other", the intended addressee of an utterance may not be actually present when the utterance is made. But I am of the opinion that the others as absent intended addressees are only introduced as a relevant factor within the discourse between the abstract author and the implied reader. Within the latter relationship (as will be demonstrated below) they are no longer threatened, but (some of them at least) are included in the favoured circle of comprehending recipients.

It may nevertheless be that the abstract author, Matthew, is trying to save the conversation with the implied reader of the gospel and is thus refraining from using the stronger form. This seems excluded, because he has already used the exceedingly harsh statement about the others in verse thirteen where he even denied them seeing and hearing on the most elementary level (Gnilka 1961:17).

What about the meaning which gives a completely different perspective: "Perhaps"? In the case of Matthew this seems highly improbable as there is no dependence on the Targum as in Mark. But the translation with "perhaps" is unlikely because of another reason as well. As we have analysed the conversation up to this point it became evident that the aim of the conversation is to assure the disciples that the apparent futility of the communication by means of parables to outsiders is not a sign of the failure of the proclamation of the kingdom, but that the hope and success of the proclamation are centered on the good soil, that is the proclamation to the disciples. The fact that they hear the message and that they receive the illumination is the crucial issue. Beside that everything else is irrelevant. The conversation does not purport to make assertions about the (eventual) conversion or aversion of the others. The hope of the success does not lie with the others, but with the disciples. That does not exclude that some of the others may come to repentance. But it is simply not important for the moment. At present the disciples hear and receive. It is therefore improbable that the Matthean abstract author would introduce the issue of the possible conversion of the others here. In this sense there is no "Verstockungs"-theory in the passage.

The narrated addressees are assured of their position in God's Kingdom, but what is conveyed to the implied reader?

The first important observation is that the reader is made privy to the counselling of the disciples by Jesus. The implied reader is thus drawn into the intimate circle to which the disciples belonged. The insights
once imparted to them, become the privilege of the reader as well. The implied reader is cast into the role of a disciple too. The real reader may of course decide not to accept the role implied by the text. He may accept to disregard the relation between himself and Jesus implied by the text. That does not alter the fact that he has been taken into the confidence of the abstract author of the gospel by the report of the conversation between Jesus and his disciples. The simple fact of the written report of the conversation constitutes the end of the period of concealment. It is, as a written report, a wider form of publication than the oral, intimate one which is represented in the gospel itself. Is this an unforeseen consequence or an intended result? This wider publication may be seen as the result of the command contained in the gospel (Mt. 28:19) to the disciples to make disciples of all the nations.

The implied reader deduces from this conversation between Jesus and his disciples that the growing antagonism on the part of the Jewish authorities towards Jesus is not going to abate. As the “others” refers to a cross-section of this Jewish community the implied reader is informed that the provoked rejection of Jesus is widespread. The incident becomes an assurance that the crucifixion as the climax of this rejection is not a chance happening due to unforeseen circumstances, but is a calculated effect. By being given the information and knowledge, the implied audience has no excuse not to accept the message concerning Jesus. The responsibility for the acceptance of the message thus lies completely with the reader. The authoritative exhortation, “Let him who have ears, hear!” (Mt. 13:9) is directed by the abstract author with extreme earnestness towards the implied reader. The implied reader is not instructed about the future of Israel, but is confronted with the responsibility of accepting or rejecting the message concerning Jesus as God’s unique emissary which is presented to him in the clearest possible terms.

The implied reader is assured that the rejection of Jesus by God’s own people has not impeded God’s purpose or the success of Jesus’ mission. The very act of reading the gospel signifies a process of growth and harvest which validates the promise made to the disciples. Between the implied reader of the gospel and the disciples (narrated addressees) in the gospels lies the recounted event of the crucifixion. The implied reader is more effectively reassured than the narrated addressees. The ultimate rejection of Jesus by the other could not avert the successful course of the proclamation of the message of the kingdom. God has shown himself stronger than all opposition. It is indeed the message of the successful kingdom which is addressed to the disciples.
The questions of readers concerning the justness of God's acts towards the others/Israel are put aside before the overriding issue: God cannot be reproached for his actions towards the other, because the reader is being challenged in the same privileged way as the disciples had been. The reader has got to decide for himself whether he is part of the good soil or not.

At this point the issue of the authorial readers of the gospel arises (cf. Petersen 1984:40-1). The authorial readers are those intended as parties to the communicative transaction. "Authorial readers belong to the text's own interpretive context" (Petersen 1984:40). Does the role of the implied reader include those who do not share faith in Jesus? Or is it strictly for believers? It seems certain that the implied reader, conceived of as the ideal reader, should be someone willing to come to faith in Jesus. But seen from the perspective of the missionary commission (Mt. 28:19,20) it is equally impossible to exclude the unbeliever (even if as an initial unbeliever) from among the authorial readers of the gospel.

If the reader's meeting with the message of the kingdom is not going to be as fruitless as that of the others, he should first recognise that he is completely unable to accept and understand the message without the support of God (viz. v. 15).

The words of verse sixteen, represented as addressed to the disciples, therefore come with vivid directness to the implied reader. The disciples and the implied reader are favoured with the knowledge of God's ultimate goal with the world. The prophets introduced in this verse differ from the others in that they wanted to see and hear but could not. This underlines the favoured position of the disciples already expressed by the previous remarks in the conversation. It brings the process of creating comity between Jesus and the disciples to a provisional climax. The repeated and extravagant provision made for the disciples stresses God's care for them and the implied reader. The implicature of the flouting of the textual principle of economy is a sign of the comity created by Jesus.

The explanation of the Sower follows in verses 18-23. The presentation of the explanation to the disciples supports the inference that they were also ignorant of the meaning of the parable. Whereas the preceding part of the conversation stressed compliance with the politeness principle as a means of creating comity with the disciples, the giving of the explanation expresses compliance with the cooperative principle. What was demanded previously, namely the understanding of the parable of the Sower (Mt. 13:9) is now given. "Ἀκούσατε" means "understand" in Matthew 13:18. The use of the lexeme is significant
seen against the background of the frequency of its use in verses thirteen to sixteen. Whereas previously the disciples were told about listening and (not) hearing/understanding, they are now going to be engaged in the act of understanding itself.

This act of understanding in which the disciples are about to be engaged, is a further phase in the development of the conversation between Jesus and his disciples. I will call Jesus' explanation the "application" for reasons which will become clear (cf. Magass 1975).

The explicit use of the phrase "word of Kingdom" (v. 19) confirms the parable as proclamation of the kingdom. That Jesus is the sower may be inferred from this. It has already been explained to the disciples that Jesus is the one who imparts knowledge of the kingdom (v. 11-13,16). The application serves to affirm the parable as a model for the proclamation of the kingdom. The Sower is the parable which serves as prototype for all the parables as well as for Jesus' proclamation in general.

The narrative of the Sower contains – as is evident from the analysis of the sense as well as the ensuing conversation – a promise (entailing reassurance) with an inherent threat (entailing a warning). The promise is conditional: if, and only if Jesus' proclamation is accepted and understood as proclamation of the kingdom, will the parable function for the recipient as a promise and reassurance. The parable promises the eventual fruition of the kingdom through the method implemented by Jesus. The addressees must recognise this condition. The urgency of this condition was brought home by the concluding hortatory remark, added to the parable.

The application differs in its illocutionary force from that of the parable itself. The application asserts the relationships between the parable world and the disciple's circumstances. The content is more or less neutral to the social goal.

In the application the various circumstances and causes are given for the lack of the proclamation of the kingdom's fruition. The recipients and the message are metonymically associated: What happens to the seed is what happens to the recipient concerned. The dangers to the correct understanding and acceptance are revealed. This serves as an implied warning to the disciples. The disciples' attention is drawn to the practical causes of the failure of the proclamation in some instances. It is essentially an open list which can be filled out with various other causes (as has been done in the Gospel of Thomas). In the preceding conversation, following the telling of the parable, God's and Jesus' responsibilities have been stressed. They were shown to be in full authority and capable of bringing the proclamation of the kingdom to
a successful conclusion. In the application the narrated addressees' (the disciples') attention is fixed on their own responsibility, by indicating the circumstances which could seduce them to disobedience.

The application follows the same pattern as that of the parable’s narrative (Du Plessis 1977:47; Vorster 1977:135). It is not a hit and run allegorisation of the parable, but it does not realise the full potential of the parable’s meaning in terms of its illocutionary force, sense and pragmatic force (cf. Du Plessis 1985:96). By omitting a number of these issues (they are partly presupposed, partly already expounded in the preceding conversation) the stress is laid on the various groups receiving the message of the kingdom and their attitudes and circumstances. This perspective is founded in the repeated reference to ὅπως ἔστω. The soil on which no harvest is delivered is not treated as a whole, but individually. The attention is directed to the various causes for disobedience. The addressees are implored by implication to consider their own position (cf. Marin 1982:102) and to listen with responsibility.

The promise and assurance which are the illocutionary forces of the parable can now be fully realised by the disciples. It is possible to recognise the urgency of the appeal to listen carefully. By listening carefully, by understanding and accepting, they are productive and exemplary of the eventual success of the kingdom. The disciples are impressed with the fact that they have been given all the conditions and prerequisites to receive and understand.

The pragmatical force of the conversation with the disciples, which was initiated by the telling of the Sower and which reaches a preliminary conclusion with the giving of the explanation of the parable, is the creation of a relationship between Jesus and the disciples in which he is the dominant partner and they are shown to be dependent on him. They are urged to accept and adhere to his words. By doing this they are part of the future success of the kingdom. In brief: the disciples must adhere to the relationship of discipleship with Jesus. Everything converges on this: the promise and assurance of the parable; the implied warning; the assertion that the kingdom comes in this way; the stress on God’s and Jesus’ full control of the situation; the stress on the lack of obedient listening as a calculated event; the continuous assurance given to the disciples of their privileged position and the illumination of the dangers threatening the relationship.

The remarks about the purpose of the parables (vv. 10-17) can only be understood within this framework of the conversational thrust. They are a foil which is used by Jesus to illuminate the relationship between himself and his disciples. Inferences about the use of the
parables in general can only be made against this background.

One important deduction is possible. In the telling of the parables Jesus establishes his authority and he focuses on the way in which he directs the course of events. Both the comity and the antipathy of the recipients are elicited by Jesus.

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